

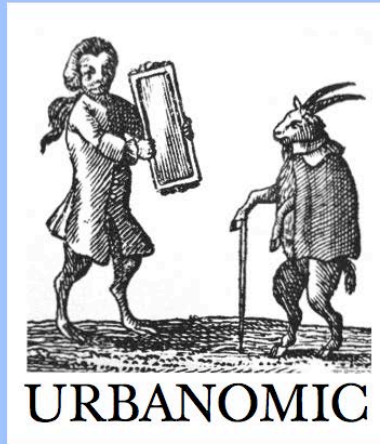
Robin Mackay:

URBANOMIC

[Texto presentado en el [Seminario-Encuentro *Publicaciones \(no solo\) de arte: usos culturales, sociales y políticos*](#) (Sevilla, 15 – 18 de junio de 2011) incluido dentro del programa de [UNIA arteypensamiento](#)]

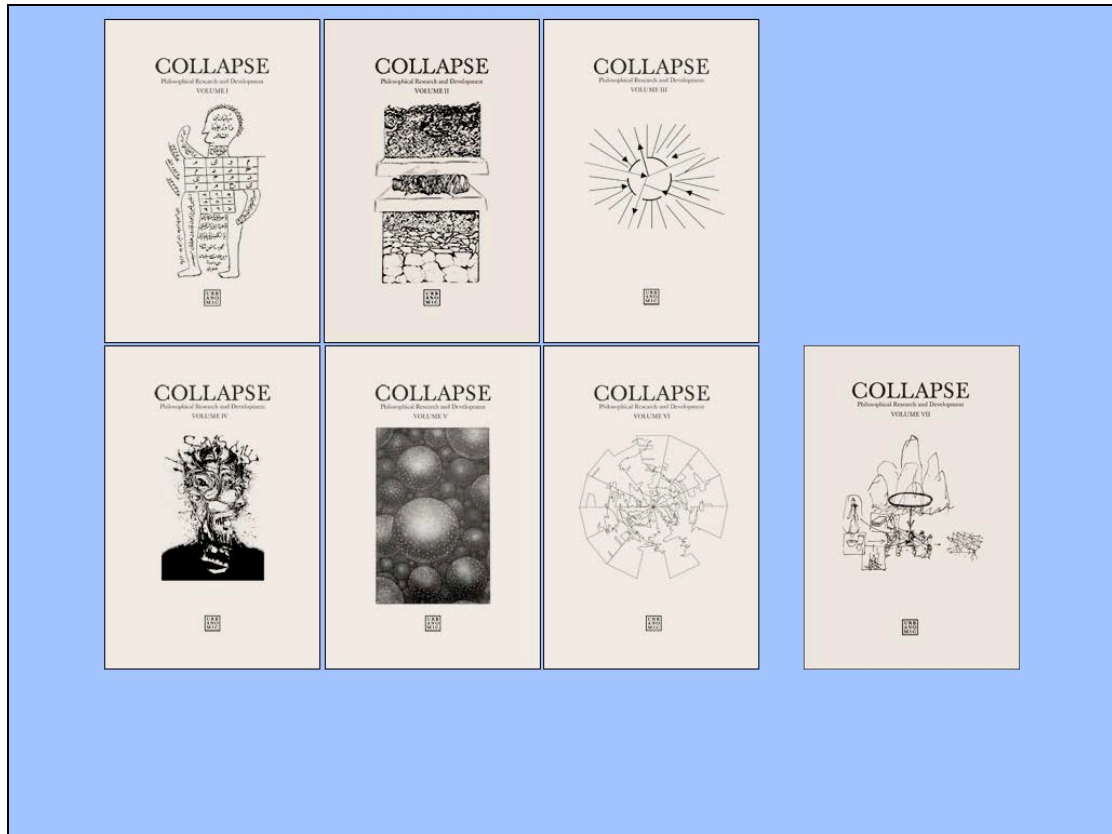
Robin Mackay (Urbanomic)

Collapse



I am very pleased to participate in this symposium and to share my experience. Although I have to say that I do so as the amateur among you! I am not (I hope) too naïve; but I will be idealistic without apology, because my project is still at a stage where it requires the sheer energy of idealism and enthusiasm to continue.

Urbanomic is a publishing company that began in 2006 when I printed the first volume of what I called a 'journal of philosophical research and development', **Collapse**. We are now just about to publish volume VII, and Urbanomic has also made other publications, been involved in arts events, commissions and residencies. But the core of Urbanomic remains **Collapse**, because it is through my editorial work in **Collapse** that we have been able to build a growing network of people – philosophers, theorists, contemporary artists, scientists – who are equally enthusiastic about the concepts behind **Collapse** and want to get involved, and who in turn introduce me to others who share the same spirit.



So I'd like to talk about **Collapse** – how it came about, how it has developed, and the way in which it works. A brutal way of putting this would be, I don't know what I'm doing. But I'll give myself license to speculate, and to make post-justifications, and I will talk about the way in which, for me, doing philosophy is a form of – it would be presumptuous of me to say it is an art practice, but a *creative practice*, a practice of *making, making things*. Somehow Collapse has been a way of finding my way back to realizing that even in philosophy one is making things. Louis Althusser, to my mind one of the thinkers who has most penetratingly examined what it means to do philosophy, acknowledged this: In Pierre Macherey's words: 'That philosophy is a discursive affair, means materially that it "does" nothing except align words in a certain order, producing statements,' – philosophy is, in the last instance, a material practice. But it is also material in wider ways: one produces books, travels to conferences, one is linked to a global network of other people via the internet, etc. all of these are material constructions which lend structure to the way that philosophy is done today. One of the aims of Collapse is to affirm and celebrate this rather than to be self-denying and ashamed about it.

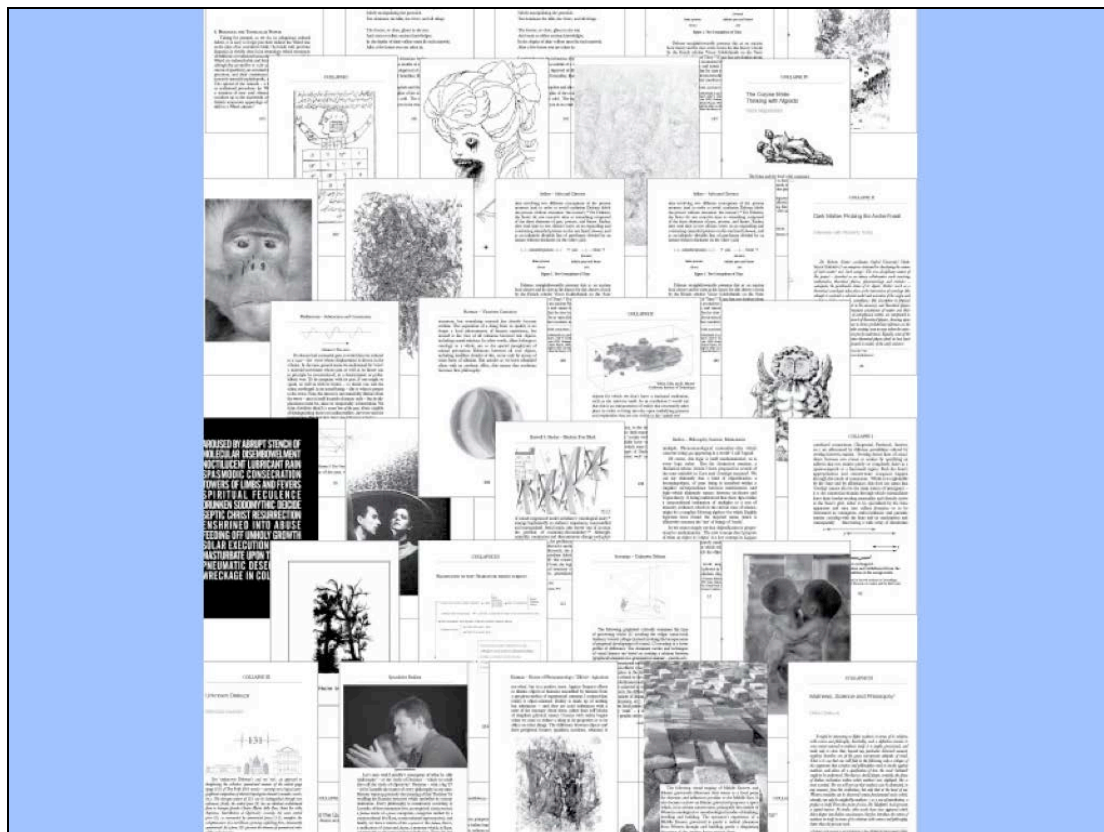
In order to admit, to reveal, to celebrate the fact that thinking philosophically is about making things, one has to take an attitude toward the subject that could be called off-centre, eccentric, or peripheral. To think around the edges and across boundaries.

So that I am constrained to begin with the question: Is it possible any longer for there to be peripheral thought in an academic discipline such as philosophy? In any case, most people probably think, with some justification, that philosophy is long dead: all the classic 'big questions' about how the universe works have been answered in cosmology and physics; the most powerful ways of thinking about the nature of life and the nature of cognition now belong to biology and cognitive science; and on the other hand questions about the way in which humans relate to each other, to time, to space, and to the world have been skilfully and accessibly interrogated by modern and contemporary artists. Indeed conceptual and post-conceptual art seem, for better *and* worse, to have colonized the space of philosophy whilst philosophy has retreated into academic isolation.

So it could well appear that philosophical questions are alive everywhere except in philosophy departments. Unfortunately I think many inhabitants of the latter have quiescently internalised this sense of diminished importance. What should be the most speculative, the most transversal of all disciplines of thought, ends up as a moribund battleground of partisans of this or that school of thought, who won't or can't talk to each other. Entrenched positions, mutual suspicion, office politics, all the usual neuroses and jealousies of the academy. Even when the ramifications of philosophical positions are radical and far-reaching, philosophers think that it's not their business to pursue those extra-philosophical consequences.

Ultimately this means that underlying intellectual assumptions are not questioned because to do so might jeopardise research grants or disrupt hierarchies. Such are the facts as to the materiality of philosophical thought as it exists in the world today. Not to mention the disastrous tendency in the last decade or so continually to measure the so-called 'performance' of research departments, so that staff are constantly under pressure to publish. Under these kind of pressures, it's hard to see how within the university the freedom can be found to ask challenging philosophical questions, to sharpen the cutting edge of thought, to work on the periphery. Because the peripheral questions are by definition those that connect philosophy to its outside; they are, therefore, a threat to the security of the discipline. A discipline which, on the contrary, is constrained jealously to police its boundaries and to consolidate its little kingdom.

All this is just so much moaning, of course; but **Collapse** was first of all about transforming this personal dissatisfaction into a public, positive, gesture – and a potentially embarrassing and humiliating gesture! For a while, for all the reasons enumerated above, I thought about abandoning the term ‘philosophy’ altogether, and calling **Collapse** a journal of ‘fundamental research’ – but I think philosophy is worth fighting for, bloody-mindedly.



So, the best way to introduce **Collapse** is as a strange combination between a philosophy journal, a fanzine – that is, a rather personal, idiosyncratic, non-commercial and non-academic publication; and an ongoing art project – the making of a work through the assemblage or, better, *montage* of other people's work.

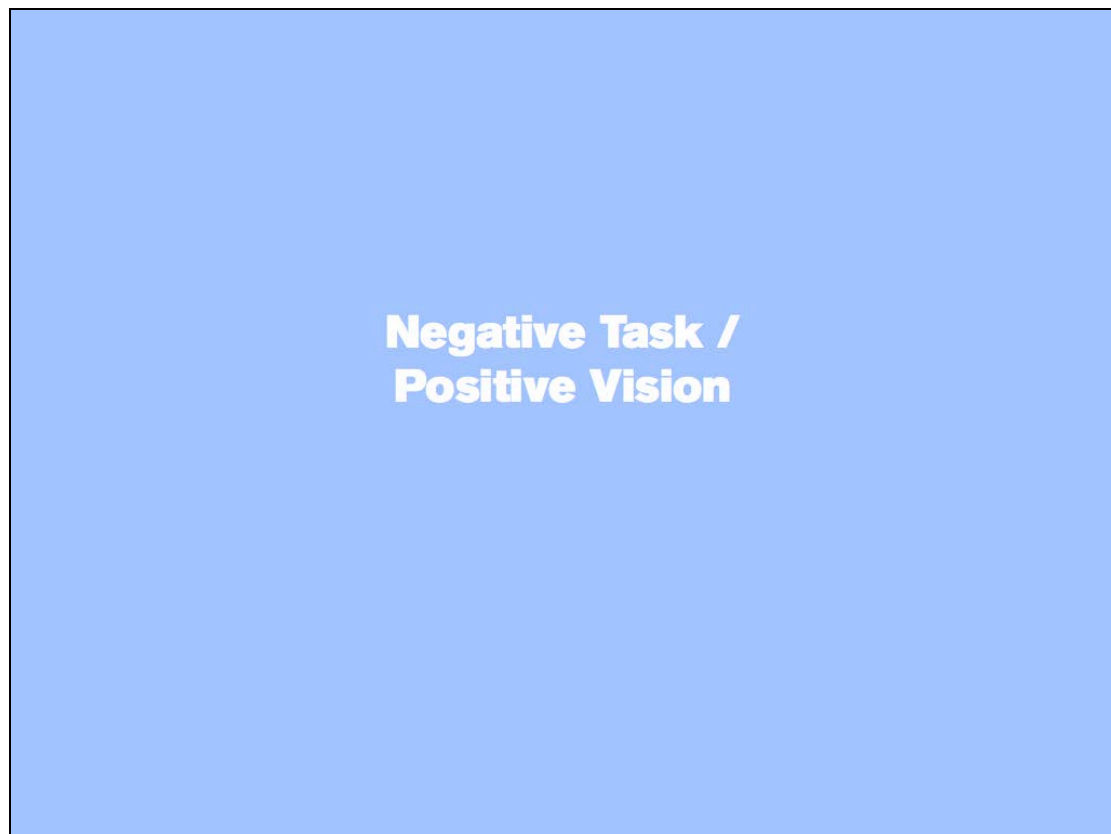
For this reason, I won't be able to offer any advice or insight into professional publishing, since **Collapse** and **Urbanomic** have only become professional, or semi-professional, by a happy accident. What was a genuine experiment, has become an experimental success.

However, what I would like to present are certain models of editing or curation that have become retrospectively clear to me, and which I believe are the cause for this unexpected success, both in the academic world – which was exactly the world that **Collapse** set out to escape – and the art world – of which, when I began making **Collapse**, I knew very little.

What I will talk about bears upon the content, mode of distribution, and commercial aspects of what Collapse has achieved, and as I have already mentioned, I would consider all of these different aspects as equally important to the project.

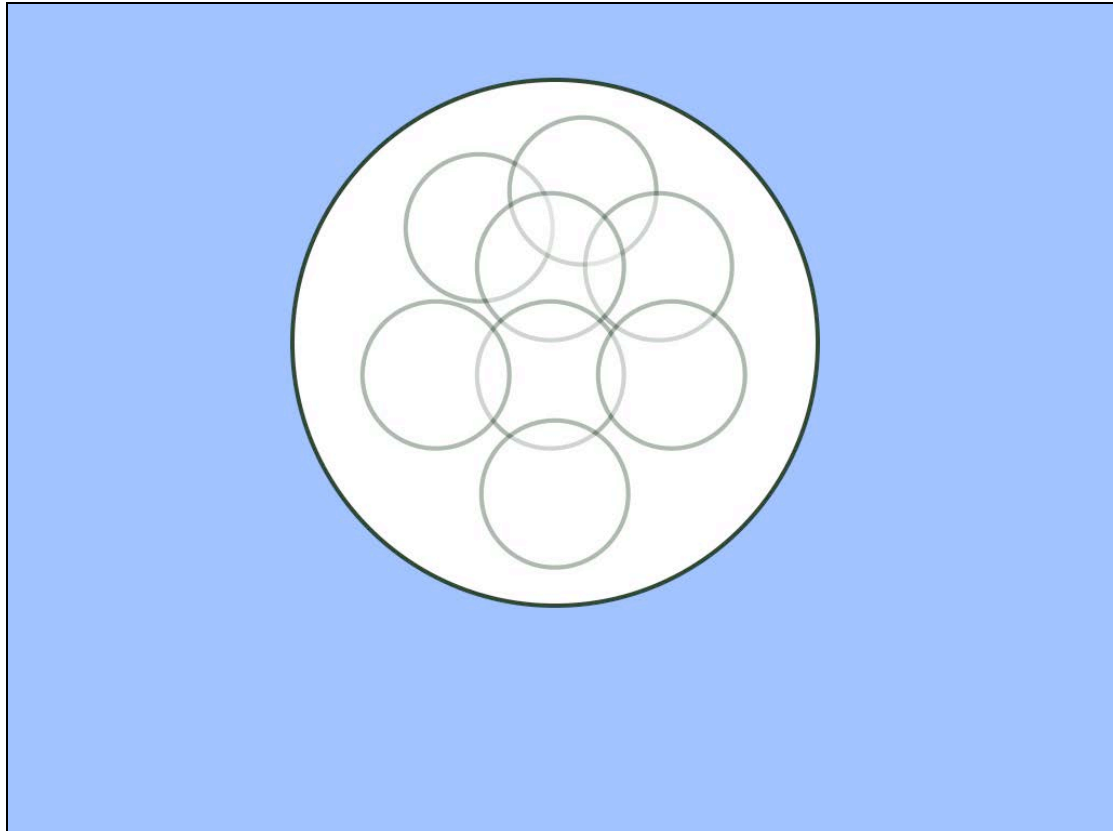
Throughout the presentation I will introduce a series of terms, that I have come to see as the crucial keystones of the project.

This model that I will describe, which has emerged gradually through my ongoing reflection on what began as a very personal project, has developed over the years I have been publishing Collapse, but it has its basis in the impulses that drove me to create the journal in the first place.

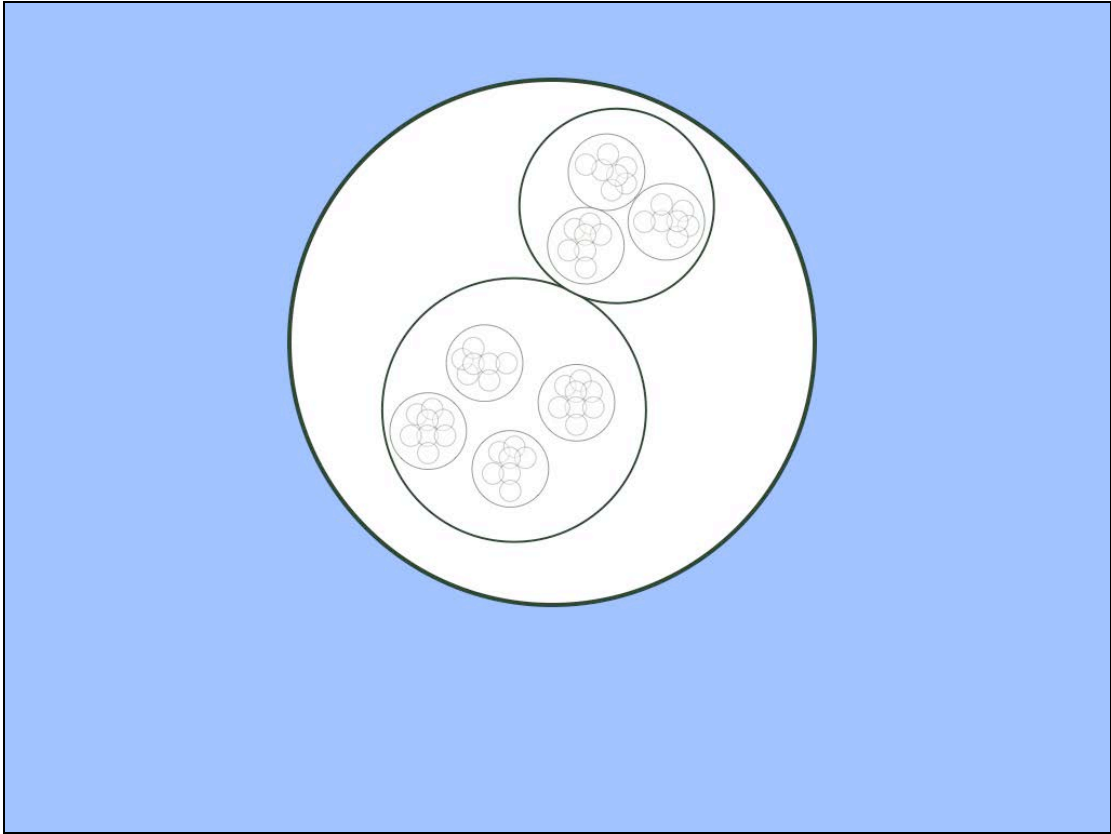


These were really twofold, consisting of a negative task, and a positive vision. But the negative side, also, was positive! As I described, I wanted to create something positive out of my frustration with academia. It seemed to me that the institutional structure of academia led to most people retreating to partisan positions, to defending their turf. And academic journals tended to construct themselves around a very narrow area of interest, with specialists who all know one another. Now, I have nothing against specialists, I think the most obscure specialist

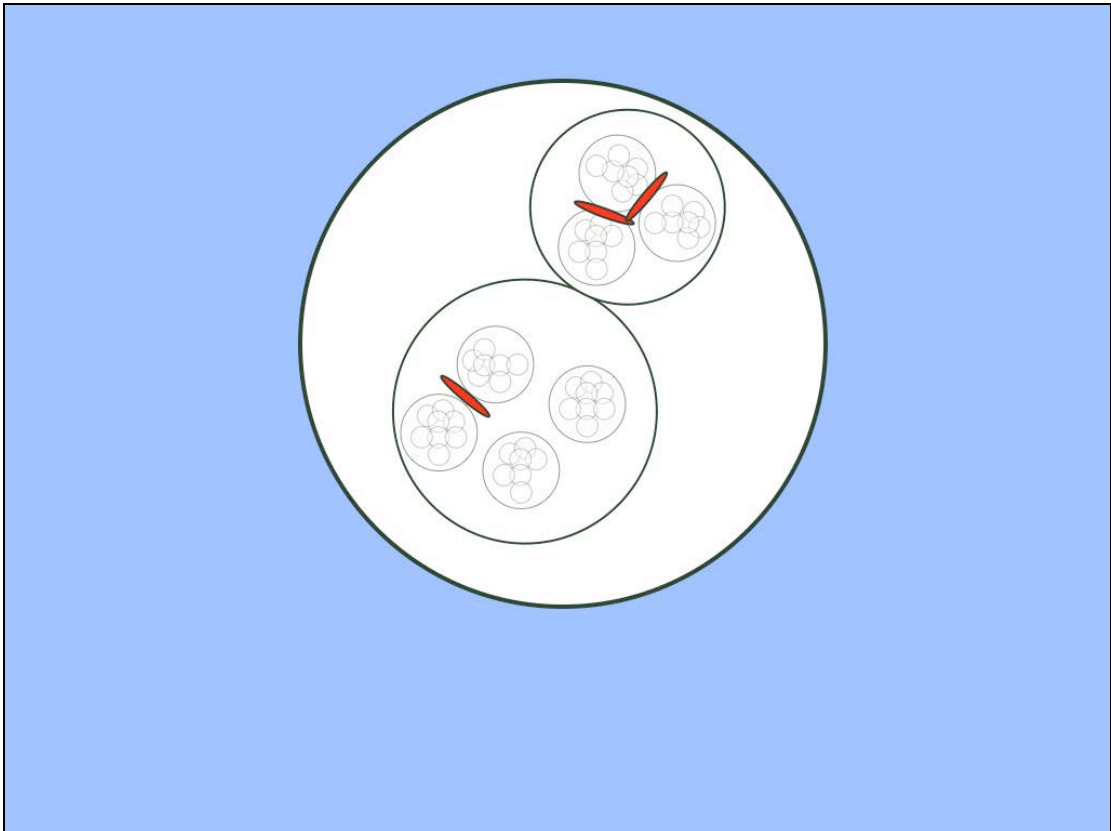
knowledge is the most fascinating. But I didn't see any publications that had a will to bring together specialists from different disciplines, to share knowledge, which had the ambition to find or create links between people who, otherwise, would never meet each other, and to use philosophy to do this. For me, this seemed like a part of the task of philosophy: to discover ways of mediating, or modulating, or mixing, different areas of knowledge about the world, so as to discover new connections and passageways for thought. I didn't find that in the academic world, where philosophy had become just another specialism.



The normal model of a journal might be understood as defining a discursive space into which all contributions have to fit, a criteria which all the contents have to follow:

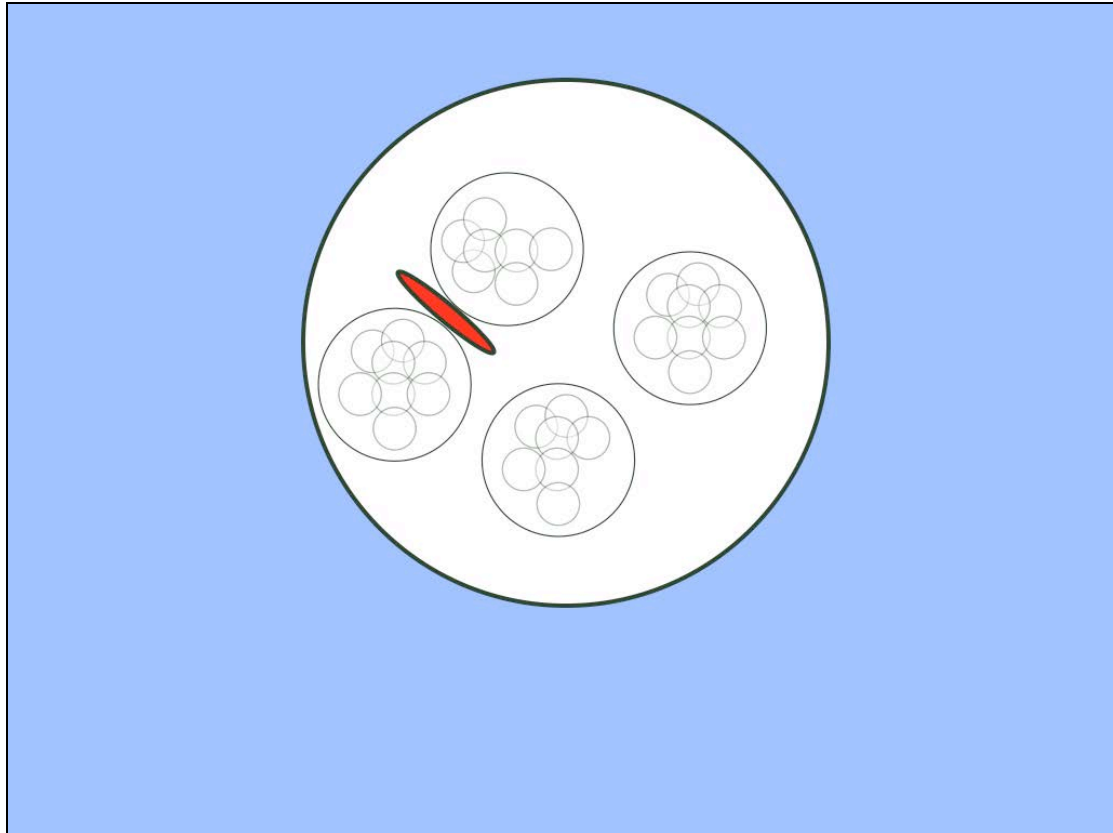


This I think reflects the structure of the university itself: The ambition of the university has always been to reconstruct, for each new generation, a global sphere of knowledge, within which sub-disciplines and their interactions are well defined.

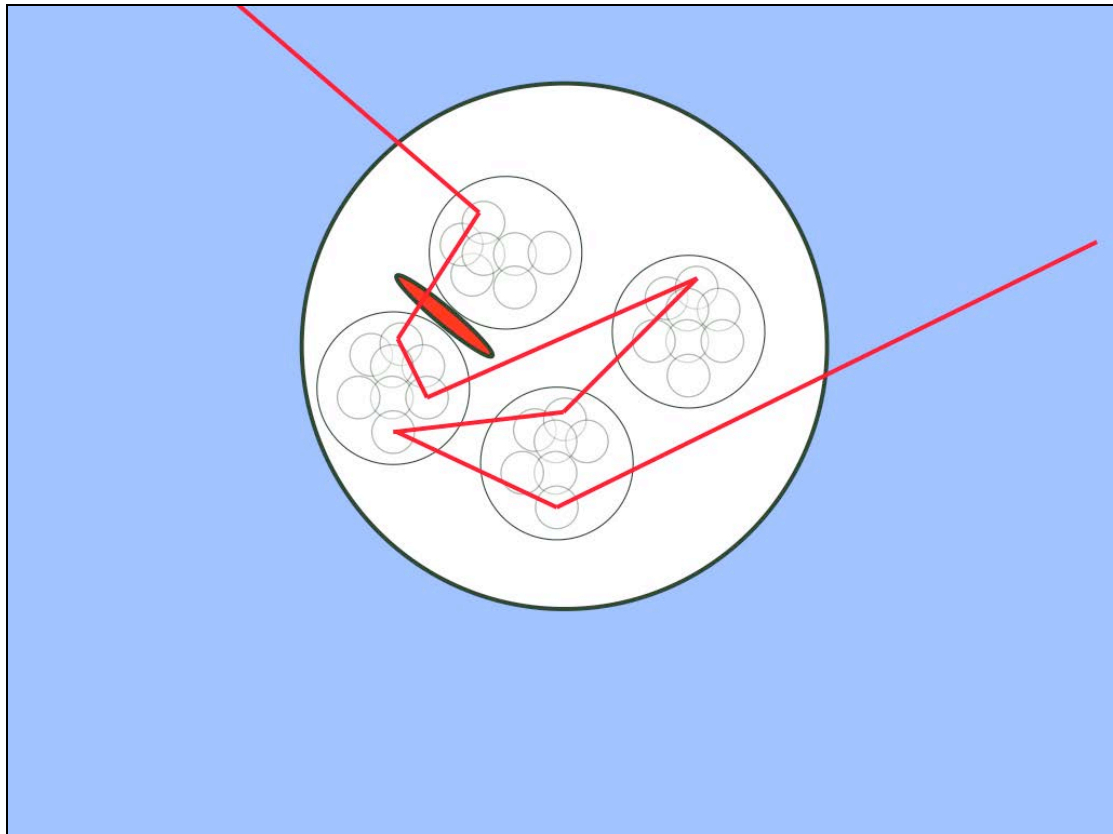


There has been, of course, in recent years, a trend towards interdisciplinary activity, but this tends to be a secondary thing, only reconfirming the disciplines in their autonomy.

Interdisciplinarity still clings to the edges of the confined spheres of knowledge.



So this was one of the motives: to find a new model that would introduce more imaginative links between researchers working in different fields, and outside academia too. That would make thought move in a different way.



The other problem with academic journals is that there is a process of homogenisation: you submit a paper, it is reviewed and returned, you submit it again, and after maybe a year it is published, by which time, in many cases, all the contents of the journal have really been flattened down to the same level. So there is a mechanism whereby the journal as institution ensures a homogeneity that contributes to this model I am discussing.

I was also interested in hearing from people who were working on new research that wasn't necessarily finished or conclusive, to publish work that gave an insight into the *process* of research, that showed thinking in progress, rather than conclusions; and that also showed how this thinking was at work in the world, how it wasn't simply academics doing armchair philosophizing. That there are *productions* of thought, whether in the work of artists, or of scientists, architects, and so on: that thought *produces*. This is the idea behind calling it a 'journal of research AND development'. A term borrowed from industry, to provoke the 'intellectual industry'.

Negative Task / Positive Vision

**Research and
Development**

And finally, another important aspect of this 'negative' task of **Collapse**: there were, in philosophy, several people I knew who were doing important work which I could see were unlikely to be published in any journal because it simply didn't fit any of the disciplinary criteria. And one of the things I am most proud of is introducing authors such as Reza Negarestani and Quentin Meillassoux, who have since gone on to attain wide recognition, and are now being invited to contribute to other (more 'respectable') journals – so there has been a sort of infection process there, where the wider world has had to accept the 'rogue elements' introduced by **Collapse**.

So, the question – in order to turn this 'negative task' into something positive – was *in what form* could one make some kind of positive gesture rather than merely bemoaning this state of affairs. And here, in order to be entirely honest about the process, I would have to mention a very personal vision of what I would like to create. As writers always say, you write the book you'd like to read; well, I wanted to edit the kind of journal I'd like to read. (Although at this point I had no idea whether anyone else would want to read it.)

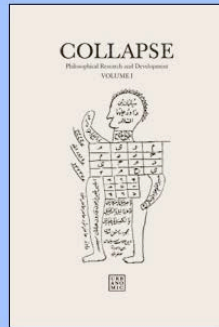
I remember very vividly as a child how it felt to have a book that felt utterly compendious, that felt like it was too huge, had too much in it, to ever read it, to ever exhaust its contents.



An encyclopedia, or one of the ‘annuals’ that we used to get for Christmas, which were filled with a miscellany of cartoons, puzzles, and stories. As a child one would pore over this repeatedly throughout the Christmas holiday (I guess they were invented to keep children quiet after they got bored of their new toys!); and I remember distinctly that when reading, I would deliberately miss out some of the pages so that I could then ‘discover’ them later. Projected from this experience was the idea of a book that was inexhaustible, which you could return to and discover new connections that you didn’t see before, and in which different types of content followed one another.

There was something about this compendiousness, the uneven nature of having many different types of content, and the inexhaustibility, that I wanted to reproduce. And – to bring these ‘negative’ and ‘positive’ aspects together – the ultimate question for me was: why, in a world that produces such an incredible variety of knowledge, such mindbending speculations, and so many different ways of looking at the world, so many modes of production – why doesn’t any of the theoretical literature reflect this, why is it intent on reproducing this banal, sober, local model of knowledge, of rationality?

So **Collapse** Volume I was conceived, as it says on the back cover of the first volume, as



A meticulously compiled and compendious miscellany, a grimoire or instruction manual without referent, as a delirious carnival of sobriety, *Collapse* operates its war against good sense not through romantic flight but through the formal insanity secreted in the depths of the rational (“the rational is not reasonable”).

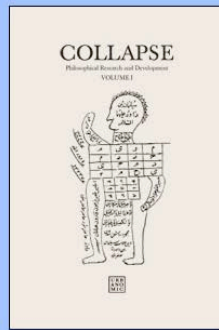
Collapse aims to force unforeseen conjunctions, singular correspondences, and unnatural cross-fertilisations; to diagram abstract regions as yet unnamed.

**Research and
Development**

“A meticulously compiled and compendious miscellany, a grimoire or instruction manual without referent, as a delirious carnival of sobriety, **Collapse** operates its war against good sense not through romantic flight but through the formal insanity secreted in the depths of the rational (“the rational is not reasonable”).

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On the other hand, I have to say that I have always had an aversion to the model of the ‘cabinet of curiosities’: I didn’t want this simply to be a random selection of items for the reader’s amusement. And the cabinet of curiosities is a certain genre to itself, which comes with its own expectations, and which I think can be equally limiting to the traditional journal model.



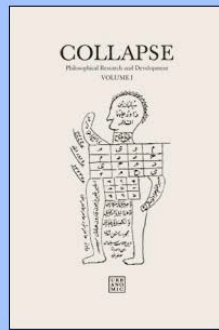
A meticulously compiled and compendious miscellany, a grimoire or instruction manual without referent, as a delirious carnival of sobriety, *Collapse* operates its war against good sense not through romantic flight but through the formal insanity secreted in the depths of the rational (“the rational is not reasonable”).

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**Research and
Development**

Consistency

Although I didn't want it to be flat and homogeneous, the assembly of all the contributions had to attain a kind of consistency, there had to be a strong logic to hold it together. It's like making a soup where you need the ingredients simultaneously to blend, to each hold their own flavour, and to interact, producing something new. And the way I have tried to achieve this in *Collapse* is by theming each volume, but by treating the theme in a maximally broad way; and crucially, by allowing the theme to 'drift' a little during the editing, so that it ends up including ingredients that even the cook didn't expect.



COLLAPSE Volume I
(Sept. 2006)
'Numerical Materialism'
286pp / ISBN 0-9553087-0-4

ALAIN BADIOU
GREGORY CHAITIN
REZA NEGARESTANI
MATTHEW WATKINS
'INCOGNITUM'
NICK BOSTROM
THOMAS DUZER
KEITH TILFORD
NICK LAND

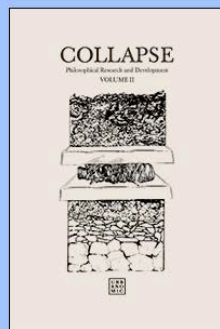
**Research and
Development**

Consistency

So, this first volume was entitled 'numerical materialism', and included an interview with Alain Badiou, along with an article on numerology, a long interview with a mathematician about prime numbers and physics, a piece by the Iranian philosopher Reza Negarestani developing a mathematical model of terrorism, another interview with a philosopher who tries to calculate the probabilities of disastrous planetary events, some artwork by a Chicago artist Keith Tilford which speaks of multiplicity and crowds...

So I would just stop there to emphasise a few things:

1. The importance of the interview – I think the interview is a much underused form: an interview allows a certain magical combination of informality and drift, and structure (because it is reviewed and edited afterwards, and the results almost always come as a surprise to the interviewee);



COLLAPSE Volume II
(March 2007)
'Speculative Realism'
315pp / ISBN 0-9553087-1-2

RAY BRASSIER
QUENTIN MEILLASSOUX
ROBERTO TROTTA
GRAHAM HARMAN
PAUL CHURCHLAND
CLÉMENTINE DUZER & LAURA GOZLAN
KRISTEN ALVANSON
REZA NEGARESTANI

**Research and
Development**

Consistency

For instance, in **Collapse II**, two articles by philosophers discuss the philosophical problem concerning scientific statements about, for example, how the universe was millions of years ago, before there was anyone around to be conscious of it, before there was life, consciousness, or language. If we insist – as many modern philosophers have – that any statement can only be a statement about how things are manifest *for us*, ultimately dependent upon the terms of some cognitive, social or linguistic consensus, then we deprive ourselves of all that science can tell us about the world: it's a kind of catastrophic divorce between science and philosophy. So how *are* we to understand these statements about a universe without us? Quentin Meillassoux puts forward a fairly clear philosophical position on this, but we also interviewed in the same volume a scientist called Roberto Trotta, who is a theoretical cosmologist at Oxford University working on the problem of Dark Matter. I think we spent 4 or 5 hours interviewing him, and the interview in *Collapse II* stretches to 80 pages, it's absolutely fascinating and really sheds light on how a scientist, in his everyday practice, does encounter these philosophical problems and develops his own apparatus for dealing with them. This is one thing that I'd insist upon, which is key for **Collapse**: everyone thinks philosophically, everyone creates concepts in their work, whether they're an artist, a scientist, or whatever: and philosophy has to be porous, it has to be able to connect with science and the arts in

order to avoid this kind of catastrophic divorce from the world, this kind of self-enforced autism.

Also, with regard to the interviews, I have to say that part of this is that I invariably approach them from a point of view of ignorance, of knowing nothing – it's frustrating when interviewers already know what they need to hear and the answers they want to hear. This is why interviews in magazines are usually so tedious, I think. For me, I usually conduct one interview from the point of view of knowing nothing, and then return later for a second session when I have had a chance to transcribe the first and ask some more intelligent questions! But it seems to work well – at least it is a genuine conversation.

2. These ideas would never 'meet' each other usually; to take again the case of **Collapse II**, In Quentin's article he develops his philosophical solution to the problem I have briefly outlined. It involves a new philosophical conception of time: in another article in **Collapse II**, the Iranian philosopher Reza Negarestani explains that there is no notion of apocalypse as such in Islamic theology, because in a sense God itself is apocalypse: The Islamic god, Negarestani argues, the god who cannot be imagined, pictured or spoken, the god who is experienced in the exhaustion and emptiness of the desert, offers us a way of philosophically thinking something which is outside all relation, and something in which all laws and relations break down. Rather than the Christian conception of apocalypse as teleological terminus, therefore, one has a conception of time as immediate and continual apocalypse, and this is very similar to the model of time that Meillassoux describes. Then Kristen Alvanson contributes a photo essay about graveyards in the middle-east, and which touches on the aspects of Islamic thought that affect the way in which the graves are constructed, very unlike western graves. So there is this weird thread leading through the volume, which connects together Ancient Persian graveyards, theology, cosmology, and the philosophy of time.

So, before these volumes existed, these strange journeys of thought had, I would guess, never been made! And all concerned had to have the right spirit to participate – although they never really got the choice because they only saw the volume when it was already a *fait accompli*!



**Research and
Development**

Consistency



**Forced
Collaboration
/ Interrupted
Relay**

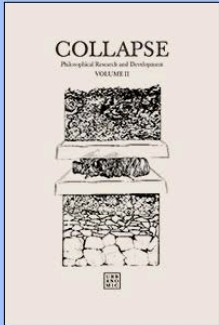
This is what I mean by 'forced collaboration'. This is an idea I came across when I was talking with the artists Jake and Dinos Chapman, who contributed to **Collapse VI**. As you know, all of their work is collaborative, but Jake told me that for their drawings, they very rarely sit in the same room together. Usually, he will draw something, and leave it, then Dinos comes in the next day and scribbles on it and then leaves it behind ... and so on.

So there is the idea here that you take work from one person, and deposit it in this *milieu*, and then later, give it back to them transformed by other elements. It's like a relay, in which there is not 'collaboration' in the sense of people working together, but there is people's work *being worked together*.

3. **Collapse** includes work by contributors at different 'levels' – from seasoned academics to people who have never been published before. And texts of different types – from the very abstract and demanding to the more conversational and accessible – are treated equally.

4, and lastly, the very personal nature of the thing – I don't have pretensions to be an artist, and I give full credit to the individual contributors, but I can only describe **Collapse** itself as a work made by me and for which I take responsibility, since all of the contributions are focussed through me and through the editorial process – although increasingly I have enjoyed working with co-editors on the volumes. This involves a keeping a certain vagueness or

looseness in place, whilst trying to maintain rigorously the object, which is to create a consistent but heterogeneous mix – so that the final product not only mixes things together, but also produces something new, that can feed back into each of the contributors' research and practice.



COLLAPSE
Philosophical Research and Development
VOLUME II

COLLAPSE Volume II
(March 2007)
'Speculative Realism'
315pp / ISBN 0-9553087-1-2

RAY BRASSIER
QUENTIN MEILLASSOUX
ROBERTO TROTTA
GRAHAM HARMAN
PAUL CHURCHLAND
CLÉMENTINE DUZER & LAURA GOZLAN
KRISTEN ALVANSON
REZA NEGARESTANI

Research and Development
Consistency

Forced Collaboration / Interrupted Relay

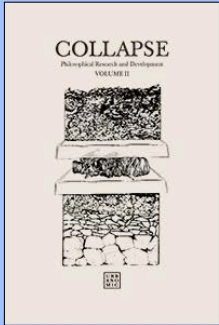
Integrity

This idea of the *integrity* of the thing is very important, and it is also the reason why Collapse is a physical and not a virtual journal. There is a certain commitment involved here: as editor, I commit myself to presenting these contributions, I *make a thing*, physically bound together, and in doing so, make the statement, or the wager, that together they produce something new and significant.

With the first volume it was really a step in the dark, there was of course the possibility of total embarrassment and humiliation. But I think that commitment is important, and that's why (and many people have asked this question) **Collapse** is not an online project. I simply don't think that, when you create something online, you attain that kind of integrity and that kind of commitment, you don't create a *whole* in the same way. And I hope that it will become clear why this idea of creating an integral whole, and its being focussed by one person, is not by any means the *opposite* of creating networks, connections, rhizomes or whatever; I think that the two things are really important to each other – and that the one may even be the most potent means to the other.

So this first volume was created very much as an experiment on the basis of those driving passions about what needed to be overcome, and a model – really, a very intuitive and vague, imaginative, even childish, model – of the form it might take. The idea was to bring together philosophers, theorists, contemporary artists, scientists, to create these themed discussions – or ‘forced collaborations’ – on very broad themes, and in this way to make thought move and produce something new.

I’ll now just look briefly about some of the volumes we have published since then, to expand on how the idea has grown and developed.

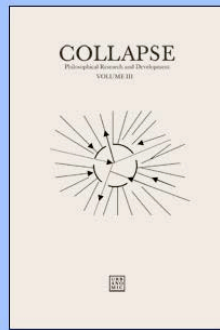


COLLAPSE Volume II
(March 2007)
‘Speculative Realism’
315pp / ISBN 0-9553087-1-2

RAY BRASSIER
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KRISTEN ALVANSON
REZA NEGARESTANI

Research and Development **Forced Collaboration / Interrupted Relay** **Integrity**
Consistency

In volume II we introduced two philosophers, Ray Brassier and Quentin Meillassoux, who were proposing what they called a ‘Speculative Realism’ or ‘Speculative Materialism’.



COLLAPSE Volume III (November 2007)
'Unknown Deleuze'
458pp / ISBN 0-9553087-2-0

THOMAS DUZER
GILLES DELEUZE
ARNAUD VILLANI
QUENTIN MEILLASSOUX
HASWELL & HECKER
JOHN SELLARS
ÉRIC ALLIEZ & JOHN-CLAUDE BONNE
MEHRDAD IRAVANIAN
J.-H. ROSNY THE ELDER
RAY BRASSIER, IAIN HAMILTON GRANT,
GRAHAM HARMAN, QUENTIN MEILLASSOUX

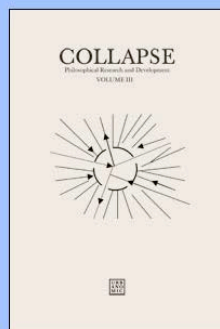
**Research and
Development**

Consistency

**Forced
Collaboration
/ Interrupted
Relay**

Integrity

In **Collapse III**, actually centred on the work of Deleuze, we published as an appendix the proceedings of a symposium at Goldsmiths Feb 2007 in London by this title, 'Speculative Realism'.



Goldsmiths
UNIVERSITY
Centre for the Study of
Invention and Social Processes
www.goldsmiths.ac.uk

COLLAPSE
www.collapsejournal.com

Speculative Realism

A One-Day Workshop
11-12pm, Friday 27 April 2007
Lecture Hall, Ben Pininfold Building
Goldsmiths, University of London
New Cross, London SE14 6NW

Participants: Ray Brassier (Middlesex), Iain Hamilton Grant (UWE),
Graham Harman (American University in Cairo),
Quentin Meillassoux (Ecole Normale Supérieure)

Contemporary 'nominalist' philosophy often pretends to be taking seriously the age-old philosophical debate between realism and nominalism. Subject-object dualism, which has already not turned into a conditioned reflex of contemporary theory, has accordingly been dissolved by the refusal of nominalism and substituted by radical steps of breaking the fundamental distinction between thought and world.

But perhaps this anti-representational (or 'nominalist') consensus - which conceals philosophy's proper and inalienable mission of the 'unconditioned' and the social contract - hides a deeper and more radical question: Is matter really so 'naïve'? And is the independent existence of matter and objects the actual, other option to 'no other terms to go to'?

This workshop will bring together the philosophical circles which ultimately stand for different concepts, questions across the field: levels of a 'conditioned' philosophy which, following the necessary production of contemporary 'Speculative realism' is not a desire, but the contrary term for a variety of research programmes committed to producing the autonomy of reality, whether in the name of transcendence procedures, which re-assert philosophy, or abstract-realistism against the foundations of anthropocentrism.

Ray Brassier
Chair, Agency for Interdisciplinary Research
11-12pm, Friday 27 April 2007
Lecture Hall, Ben Pininfold Building
Goldsmiths, University of London
New Cross, London SE14 6NW
11.00-12.00pm
12.00-12.30pm
12.30-1.00pm
1.00-1.30pm
1.30-2.00pm
2.00-2.30pm

For further information, and abstracts, contact the organiser with the above programme at: collapse@goldsmiths.ac.uk
Goldsmiths, University of London, New Cross, London SE14 6NW

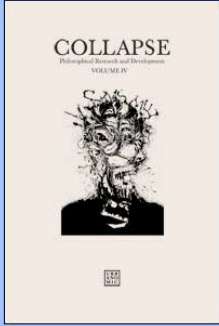
**Research and
Development**

Consistency

**Forced
Collaboration
/ Interrupted
Relay**

Integrity

This proved to be one of the most significant articles in **Collapse**, because Speculative Realism was really well-aligned with what I have said about **Collapse** as a journal: it was a group of young philosophers who were really tired of the orthodoxies that had grown up in the 90s, and were looking to open up philosophical thought beyond a perceived institutional exhaustion – in many cases through a new dialogue with the sciences. And they wouldn't have easily been published in any of the traditional places. And really this began a massive movement, which was primarily spread through online sites, through blogs, etc. and that in turn became a vector across which **Collapse** was disseminated. The art world also began to take an interest in this, as well as people working in areas as diverse as geography, ecology, physics, feminism. And so there has been this synergy between a demand for new thinking in philosophy, discovered by the idea of 'speculative realism', and **Collapse** as a vehicle for it.



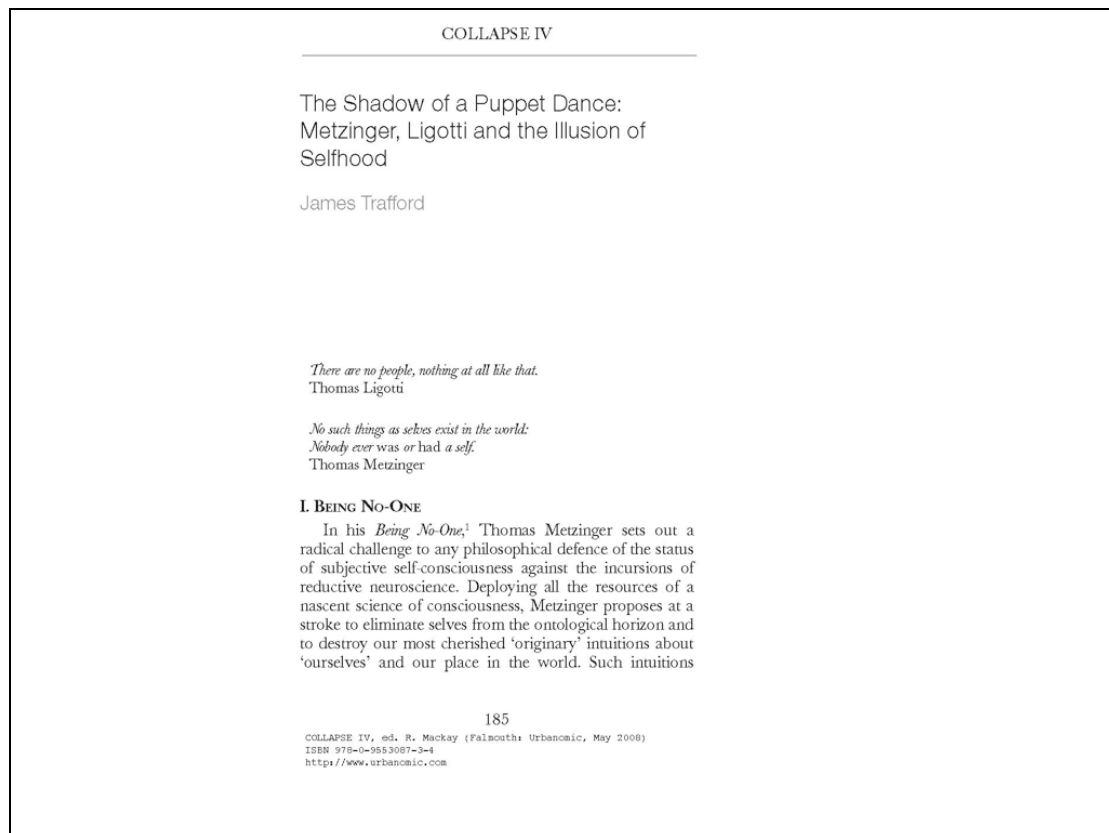
Collapse Volume IV
 (May 2008)
 'Concept Horror'
 406pp // ISBN 978-0-9553087-3-4

George Sieg
 Eugene Thacker
 Rafani
 China Miéville
 Reza Negarestani
 Jake and Dinos Chapman
 Michel Houellebecq
 James Trafford
 Thomas Ligotti / Oleg Kulik
 Quentin Meillassoux
 Benjamin Noys
 Iain Hamilton Grant / Todosch
 Steven Shearer
 Graham Harman / Keith Tilford
 Kristen Alvanson

Research and Development **Forced Collaboration / Interrupted Relay** **Integrity**
Consistency

The subtitle of volume 4 is 'Concept Horror'. It explores the link between philosophical thought and horror – in the sense that many of the conclusions one can come to through *rational* thought are not at all 'reasonable': they are rational, but at the same time rather terrifying, much like Meillassoux's argument on time. Most of the time we keep such thoughts at bay by simply considering them abstractly: for instance I 'know' that my entire body is made of mindless, endlessly interchanging particles, but I don't let that affect my everyday life...! But it's interesting that in film, in fiction, and in the work artists, an attempt is made to

force the audience to really *feel* these outlandish thoughts – especially in pulp fiction and film: So that literature and art are the places where the conclusions of abstract thought become realised as affective, emotional. For me this is one of the most interesting functions of art in relation to philosophy: to dramatise concepts so they can be *felt*.



One of the centrepieces of this volume, for me, is an essay by a postgraduate, James Trafford, who shows discusses a new book, 'Being No-One', by a philosopher of neuroscience, Thomas Metzinger. Metzinger's argument is that there is no such thing as a self. He shows how the very rigorous and empirically-based argument of Metzinger is prefigured step-by-step in the work of a horror writer, Thomas Ligotti – so, in this case, the relation is reversed, and what the artist has already turned into a fictional experience of the horrific loss of self, is later theorised and linked to what we know about the brain's structure. Thomas Ligotti himself writes in the volume, but he contributed a philosophical essay, so you have philosophers writing about horror stories, and the horror story's author writing philosophy. And incidentally in volume 5 we went on to interview Thomas Metzinger himself. George Sieg writes about how horror is linked closely to xenophobia, and how the most heightened form of xenophobia is the fear of the other within, the fear, in fact, which drove nazism to try and purify the german population. Elsewhere in the volume the czech art collective Rafani present some work called 'czech forest', which deals with the way in which

after the war, the czech people turned savagely on the germans living in the sudetenland, in a kind of relay of this xenophobia. I think there is an intricate line, or more than one line, linking all of the various contributions together into the kind of structure I indicated before.

COLLAPSE IV

Infinite Regress into
Self-Referential Horror:
The Gnosis of the Victim


George J. Sieg

0. DWELLING ON THE THRESHOLD

Aversion to stimuli of fear or terror, whether personal or cultural, offers no great mystery beyond the psychological. Neither does the pattern of habituation and desensitization resulting from levels of fear and terror sufficient only to gradually bore the mind and senses. Similarly straightforward is the pattern of trauma, burnout, and malady proceeding from constant and unremitting over-exposure to stimuli producing anxiety and stress. These phenomena, while intriguing to the scholar of behaviour and cognition, offer nothing to compete with the philosophical fascination engendered by contemplation of their weirder sister, Horror. She presides over a genre of art which violates boundaries of medium as surely as she violates the preconceptions of those who apprehend her; yet she shares her imageries, even her key signs and signifiers, with genres which would seem at first examination to be quite distinct.

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COLLAPSE IV, ed. P. Mackay (Falmouth: Urbanomic, May 2008)
ISBN 978-0-9553047-2-4
<http://www.urbanomic.com>



**Vůči Němcům pocítují Češi
hlubokou hořkost**

'Czechs feel deep bitterness towards Germans.'

Something new that happened in this volume, which I'd like to continue, is to go beyond simply mixing up different kinds of contribution within the volume; going beyond the form of the article itself, we 'teamed up' artists with writers, to make these coincidental interlinkages even more powerful. – like a Marvel comics 'team-up' issue.

'Memento Mori' – Dead Monkeys

Oleg Kulik

12 b/w photographs, 1998.
Courtesy of XL Gallery, Moscow.

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COLLAPSE IV, ed. R. Mackay (Falmouth: Urbanomic, May 2008)
 ISBN 978-0-9553087-3-4
<http://www.urbanomic.com>

Thinking Horror¹

Thomas Ligotti

BEGINNINGS

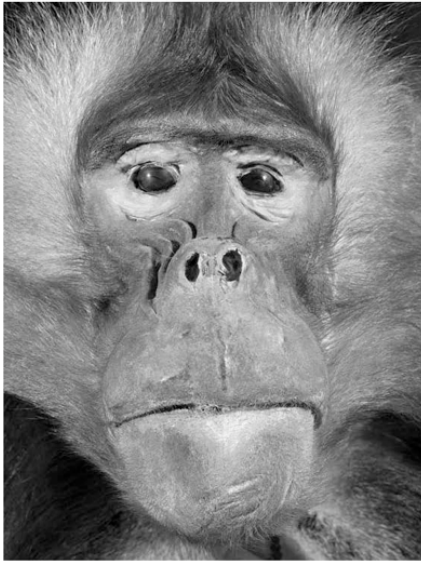
For ages they had been without heads. Headless they lived, and headless they died. How long they had thus flourished none of them knew. Then something began to change. It happened over unremembered generations. The signs of a transfiguring were being writ ever more deeply into them. As their breed moved forward, they began crossing boundaries whose very existence they never suspected ... and they trembled. Some of them eyed their surroundings as they would a strange land into which they had wandered, even though their kind had trodden the same earth for countless seasons. And after nightfall, they looked up at a sky filled with stars and felt themselves small and fragile in the vastness. More and more, they came to know a new

1. The present text is an extract from *The Conspiracy Against the Human Race: A Short Life of Horror* (forthcoming), a work which binds together themes from pessimistic philosophy and the horror genre into an exposition on the uncanny nature and ontological fraudulence of the human species.

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COLLAPSE IV, ed. R. Mackay (Falmouth: Urbanomic, May 2008)
 ISBN 978-0-9553087-3-4
<http://www.urbanomic.com>

So Thomas Ligotti's article, which is an essay in philosophical pessimism, all about the hopelessness of the human condition, our inability to get over our illusions of superiority and to accept that we are mere animals, is teamed up with a series of photographs by the Russian artist Oleg Kulik called 'Dead Monkeys',. Reading this article together with the photos makes for a really compelling experience, mor than the sum of its parts. Someone wrote to me recently that they read this whilst travelling through the desert at night-time and it was really chilling!



way of being. It was as if the objects around them were one thing and they were another. The world was moving farther and farther away, and they were at the center of this movement. Another world was forming inside the heads they now had. Each of them, in time, became frightened in a way they had never known. In former days, they were frightened only by sights and sounds in the moments they saw or heard them. Now they were frightened by things that were not present to their senses. They were also frightened by visions that came not from outside them but from within them. Everything had changed for their kind, and they could never return to what they once had been. The epoch had passed when they and the rest of creation were one and the same. They were beginning to know a world that did not know them. This is what they thought, and they thought it was not right. Something which *should not be* ... had become. And something had to be done if they were to flourish as they had before, if the very ground beneath their feet were not to fall out from under them. They could do nothing about the world which was moving farther and farther away and which knew them not. So something would have to be done about their heads.

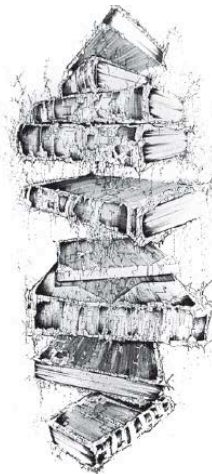
DIFFERENCES

For centuries a debate has been going on among us, a shadowy polemic that periodically attracts public notice. The issue: what do people think about being alive? Overwhelmingly, those questioned will say, 'Being alive is all right'. More thoughtful respondents will add, 'Especially when you consider the alternative', betraying a jocularity that is as logically puzzling as it is macabre, since the alternative is the first among certitudes that make being alive not

it's important to say that all these people were perfectly unaware of each other, it's only in constructing this volume that they have been put together for the first time, again creating these new peripheral lines and connections.

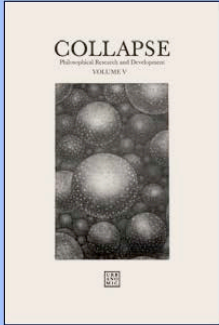
movement of human hands and legs; trees and diamonds with infinite parallel attributes, only two of them known; insular monads sparkling like mirrors and attached to tiny bodies built from chains of other monads; and the eternal recurrence of every least event. While the dismal consensus that such speculation belongs to the past is bolstered by the poor imagination of some philosophers, it finds no support among working scientists, who grow increasingly wild in their visions. Even a cursory glance at the physics literature reveals a discipline bewitched by strange attractors, degenerate topologies, black holes filled with alternate worlds, holograms generating an illusory third dimension, and matter composed of vibrant ten-dimensional strings. Mathematics, unconstrained by empirical data, has long been still bolder in its gambles. Nor can it be said that science fiction is a marginal feature of literature itself. Long before the mighty crabs and squids of Lovecraft and the tribunals of Kafka, we had Shakespeare's witches and ghosts, Mt. Purgatory in the Pacific, the Cyclops in the Mediterranean, and the Sphinx tormenting the north of Greece.

Against the model of philosophy as a rubber stamp for common sense and archival sobriety, I would propose that philosophy's sole mission is *weird realism*. Philosophy must be realist because its mandate is to unlock the structure of the world itself; it must be weird because reality is weird. 'Continental science fiction', and 'continental horror', must be transformed from insults into a research program. It seems fruitful to launch this program with a joint treatment of Edmund Husserl and H.P. Lovecraft, an unlikely pair that I will try to render more likely. The dominant strand of twentieth-century continental thought stems from the



Finally, Keith Tilford, an artist from Seattle, who also contributed to Collapse I, and whose drawing is on the cover of **Collapse IV**: a lot of Tilford's drawings are of disintegrating objects, which fits with Graham Harman's article; Graham is a philosopher who works in Cairo, another of the 'speculative realists', and who is writing, in **Collapse IV**, about the 'weirdness of objects'. You can see here, on the title page, we give equal billing to the writer and the artists, we try to meld them together into one new entity, one *thing*.

So once again there is this 'forced collaboration'. The aim, for me, is to follow what the work, what the contributions, suggest; and to let coincidences happen, to allow the materials themselves to dictate how the thing fits together. This can happen in many different ways – not just my forcing them together, but also, for example, in **Collapse II**, I received some of the contributions from philosophers, and then, when I was interviewing Roberto, the physicist, I tried to bring some of the concerns of those articles in my questions;



Collapse Volume V
 (February 2009)
 'The Copernican Imperative'
 587pp / ISBN 978-0-95530874-1

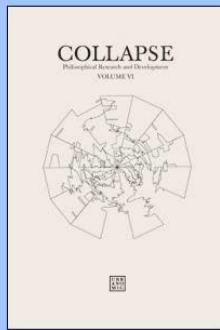
CARLO ROVELLI
 JULIAN BARBOUR
 CONRAD SHAWCROSS
 JAMES LADYMAN
 THOMAS METZINGER
 NIGEL COOKE
 JACK COHEN AND IAN STEWART
 MILAN CIRKOVIC
 NICK BOSTROM
 KEITH TYSON
 MARTIN SCHÖNFELD
 IMMANUEL KANT
 IAIN HAMILTON GRANT
 GABRIEL CATREN
 ALBERTO GUALANDI
 PAUL HUMPHRIES

Research and Development
Consistency

Forced Collaboration / Interrupted Relay

Integrity

or, in **Collapse V**, I sent some of the articles in the volume, together with my own thoughts on the theme, to Nigel Cooke, who then created a new set of paintings as an oblique response to them; the same in Collapse IV with Jake and Dinos Chapman.



Collapse Volume VI
(February 2010)
'Geo/Philosophy'
 540pp / ISBN 978-0-9553087-7-2

NICOLA MASCIANDARO
IAN HAMILTON GRANT
F. W. J. SCHELLING
GREG MCINERNEY, DREW PURVES, RICH WILLIAMS, STEPHEN EMMOTT
TIMOTHY MORTON
FIELD CLUB
OWEN HATHERLEY
EYAL WEIZMAN
ANGELA DETANICO AND RAFAEL LAIN
MANABRATA GUHA
REZA NEGARESTANI
ROBIN MACKAY
CHARLES AVERY
GILLES GRELET
RENEE GREEN

Research and Development

Forced Collaboration / Interrupted Relay

Integrity

Consistency

Volume six was entitled 'Geo/philosophy', and discussed the question of thought's relation to the earth in all its multiple dimensions, bringing philosophy into contact with geography, cartography, ecology, etc.

I
La philosophie est morte, mais elle n'est pas morte
-the death of philosophy, but not its death-

II
There is nothing, it establishes man
-the death of philosophy, but not its death-

III
This institution - this act - is a fallow attack on the world,
on the reality of the world, on the territory of the living
on attack in the void, the distance taken, in the void that is
born, although it is not born from above, or in the attack,
the act without practice, the death without becoming

IV
There are living, the dead, and those who go to sea.

VII
IL Y A LES VIVANTS, LES MORTS,
ET CEUX QUI VONT SUR LA MER

VIII
THERE ARE THE LIVING, THE DEAD,
AND THOSE WHO GO TO SEA.

IX
Il y a les vivants, les morts, et ceux qui vont sur la mer

X
There are the living, the dead, and those who go to sea.

It includes work by

- Owen Hatherley on brutalism in architecture
- Interview with Eyal Weizman on the architecture of the occupation of Palestine
- Manabrata Guha on the changing model of the earth proposed by new models of warfare
- Artist Renée Green's film 'Endless Dreams'
- Artists Detanico and Lain's recoding of map data
- And work by british artist Charles Avery



Fig. 1. Martin Behaim's *Erdapfel*

COLLAPSE VI

Becoming Spice: Commentary as Geophilosophy

Nicola Masciandaro

The overman is the meaning of the earth [...] Once the sacrilege against God was the greatest sacrilege, but God died, and then all these desecrators died. Now to desecrate the earth is the most terrible thing, and to esteem the bowels of the unfathomable higher than the meaning of the earth.
Friedrich Nietzsche¹

I don't know if you were frightened, but I at any rate was frightened when I saw pictures coming from the moon to the earth. [...] Only a god can save us.
Martin Heidegger²

No knower necessarily stands so close to the verge of error at every moment as the one who philosophizes.
Martin Heidegger³

1. F. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. A. Del Caro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 'Zarathustra's Prologue', 6.

2. M. Heidegger, "Only a God Can Save Us", *Der Spiegel's* Interview with Martin Heidegger (1966), trans. M. P. Aker and J. D. Caputo, in *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader*, ed. R. Wolin (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993), 105-7.

3. M. Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, trans. W. McNeill and N. Walker (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 19.

New Ecologies

Interview with Stephen Emmott, Drew Purves, Greg McInerny and Rich Williams

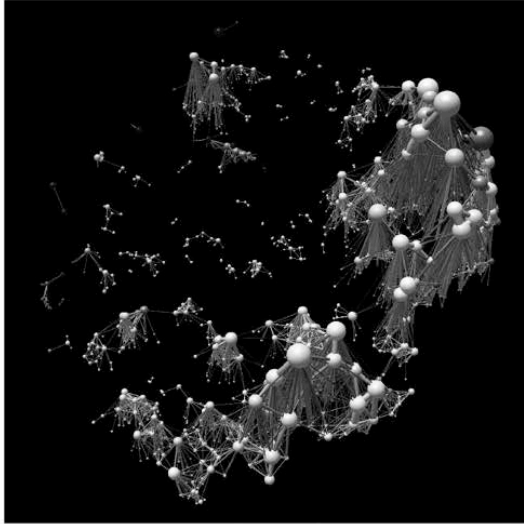


Fig 1. Meadow network from Yosemite National Park. Each node (ball) is a meadow. Node diameter is proportional to area. Each link is a possible connection between meadows, where link strength is proportional to meadow size and inversely proportional to distance between meadows and links below some threshold strength are omitted. The network is viewed looking to the north and looking down; the x, y location of each node is the meadow's geographic location and height is the meadow's connectivity (number of links attached to the meadow). Node colour is proportional to elevation and link colour is proportional to distance between nodes. Data courtesy of Eric Berlow.

The many dire environmental warnings to which we have become accustomed all have their basis in predictive models devised by scientists. But what degree of confidence can we place in such models, and on what basis are they constructed? Scientists in the Computational Ecology and Environmental Science Group at Microsoft's Computational Science Lab, based in Cambridge, England are working at the cutting edge of environmental science, devising new methods to computationally model climate change and its effects. This work involves adapting statistical methods to reflect the particularities of the extremely complex and interconnected objects of biology and ecology.

In COLLAPSE's interview with four of the scientists working at the Lab, we discuss the new impetus that environmental concerns have imparted to ecology as a science, demanding a re-examination of its objects and its aims. They describe the delicate compromises that must be made between tractability, complexity, and the urgency of the problems which they are addressing, and the necessary confrontations with the historical scientific legacy involved in rethinking the biosphere. In this process, new models of scientific thought and practice are emerging.

(a kind of organic niche-fundamentalism)? So the problems of biodiversity aren't limited to preservation – they also involve a consideration of how the evacuation of one niche will alter another, will allow another species to expand perhaps dangerously – in a 'cascade' effect.

GM: It is probably best to first consider why a species has a limited range in the first place – why it has a niche and why that niche is defined the way it is.

Everything has ranges, so there must be some trade-offs in the physiological engineering of life that means being good at something makes you less good at something else. Some species are more generalist than others, so there are differences between trade-offs at different points on a gradient, or different ways of doing that engineering that can overcome obstacles.

But there can also be barriers created by the structure of genes and their inter-relationships. Linkage between genes may mean that a change in one gene affects other genes, so evolution can be constrained if the other genes are affected negatively. This is an engineering problem as well. (Of course it is important to remember that this engineering is done in a passive way: Life doesn't see a problem and try to surmount it. It is done, beautifully, through natural selection.)

Then we can ask why niches are fairly stable and why they occur where they do in a space. For instance, if you think of a tree line on a mountain: Why hasn't the tree evolved to be a bit more tolerant of cold? Why don't things evolve a little bit more to be more 'successful'? Why can't species live at one degree more or one degree less than their

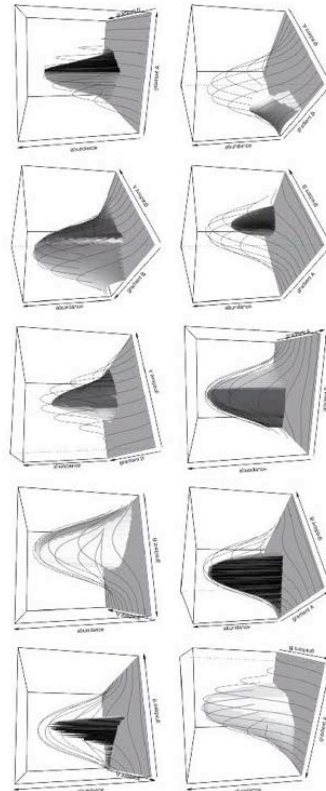


Fig 2: The effect of competition between species. These are the results of competition between a group of species in a computer simulation. There are two abstract environmental 'gradients', e.g., gradient A = temperature and gradient B = rainfall. The species have restricted niches along these gradients (x and y axes). The black lines show the outline of the fundamental niche defined by the abundance of each species (the z axis). The grey surface shows the realised niche after competition between species has occurred. Species may not live everywhere they can because other species out-compete them. In the top left panel the species has been severely restricted by competition. Note that correlation between its realised niche and the gradients would tell us very little about where the species can actually live. The other species show varying levels of inequality between fundamental and realised niches, demonstrating that a 'correlative model' between the environmental conditions and abundance would give results erroneous to some degree depending on the species.

As well as publishing 'traditional' philosophical work – here, a new translation of some of Schelling's writings – there is also a timely element to this question of geophilosophy: I interviewed a group of computational ecologists at Microsoft who are working on climate change

models.



Figure 2: Ernst Haeckel, *Phacodaria*, from *Kunstformen der Natur* (1904)

Morton - Thinking Ecology

radiolarians show beings that look like geometrical plots rather than squishy organisms (Figure 2). That's because they are. The trouble with animals is that on some level they're vegetables, beings that just grow - isn't this the governing theme of many a horror story? And the trouble with vegetables is that they're algorithms. Consider *The Algorithmic Beauty of Plants*, a beautifully illustrated text readily available online.¹³ Instead of illustrating plants, you can generate algorithms that plot them. Plant scientists now model plant growth using software like this. If an algorithm can plot a rose, surely the thing itself is a map of its genome, a three-dimensional expression of the algorithm's unfolding? I can only conclude that I, a supposedly sentient life form, am also subject to these rules.

Strange strangers are uncanny in the precise Freudian sense that they are familiar and strange simultaneously. Indeed, their familiarity is strange, and their strangeness is familiar. Strange strangers are unique, utterly singular. They cannot be thought as part of a series (such as species or genus) without violence. Yet their uniqueness is not such that they are utterly independent. They are composites of other strange strangers. We share their DNA, their cell structure, subroutines in the software of their brains. They are absolutely unique and so capable of forming a collective of life forms, rather than a *community*. *Community* is a holistic concept that is greater than the sum of its parts. Since the Interdependence Theorem implies that there is no whole (such as 'animals', Nature and so on), *community* can only ever be a conceptual construct.

13. P. Prusinkiewicz and A. Lindenmayer, *The Algorithmic Beauty of Plants*, with J. S. Hanan, F. D. Fracchia, D. Fowler, M. J. M. de Boer, and L. Mercer (Przemyslaw Prusinkiewicz, 2004); available at <http://algorithmicbotany.org/papers/>.



COLLAPSE VI

How Many Slugs Maketh the Man?

FIELDCLUB

FIELDCLUB investigates the interface between the human and the slug, and the augmentation of the human niche through the development of technospheric devices.

pp226-229. *Bound Excess Diagram*

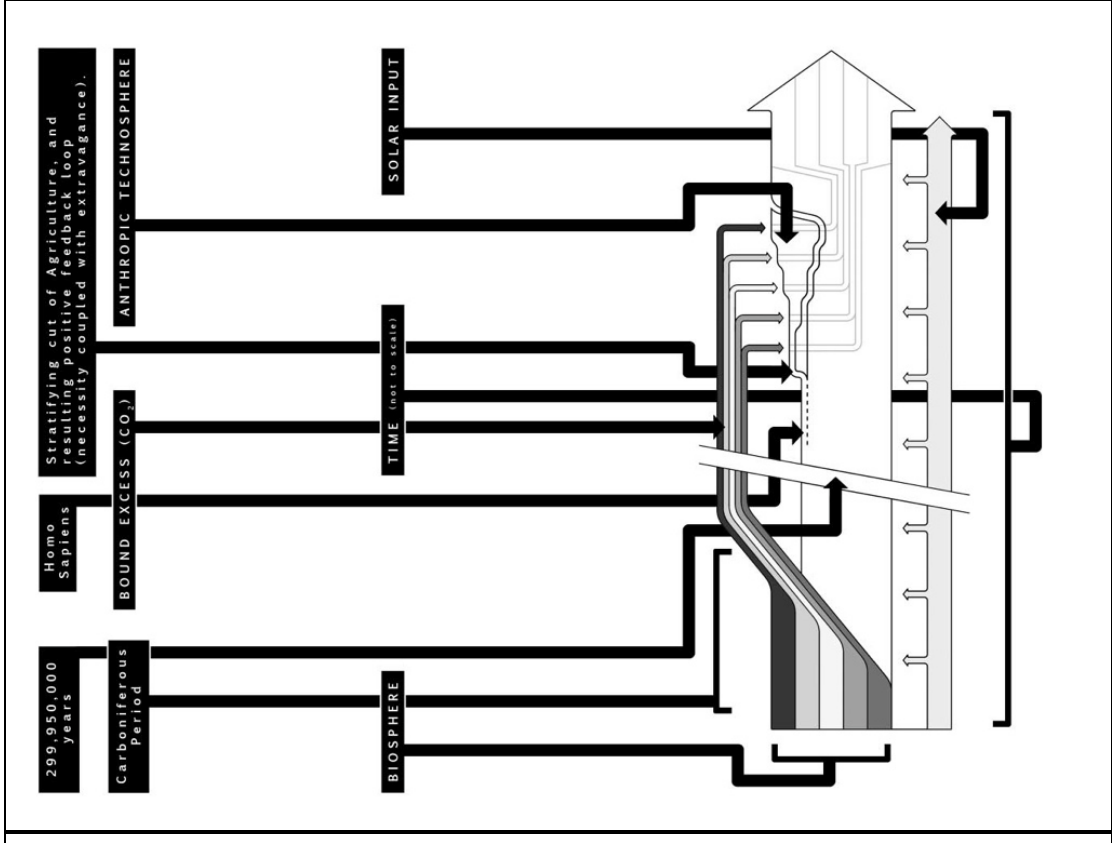
pp230-233. *Slug'o'metric Series: How many Slugs Maketh the Man?*

www.fieldclub.co.uk

SLUG'O'METRIC I
2007 - TOTAL 1581

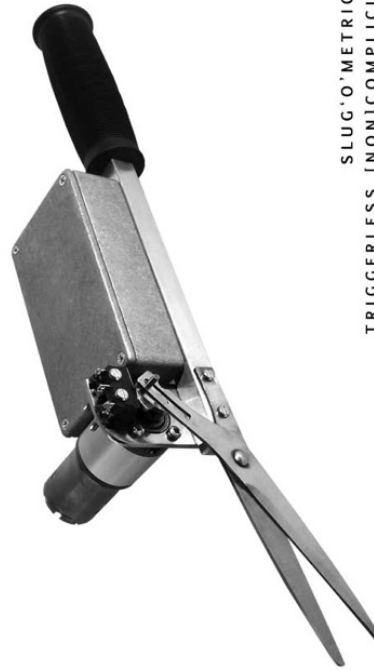


SLUG'O'METRIC II
2008 - TOTAL 968





SLUG'O'METRIC III
REMOTE ACTUATOR
2009 - TOTAL 456



SLUG'O'METRIC III
TRIGGERLESS [NON]COMPLICITOR
2009

COLLAPSE VI

C: The occupation seems to have continually identified geographical and topological contingencies, accentuating amplifying and exploiting them through architectural intervention. *DA* employs similar tactics, but in order to defuse colonial power.

EW: Again, I think you can say that our aim throughout the project is not to simply undo the power and techniques of the occupation but to reorient them.

For instance, we have permission from the Mayor of Beit Sahour to redesign a military base that was evacuated two years ago.¹⁰ It is a beautiful area overlooking the town (obviously) and the desert – horrible but also beautiful. It's like a big fortress where soldiers piled earth continuously into ramparts until the top of the hill started looking like the crater of a volcano. And in there, in this place, by some



10. http://www.decolonizing.ps/site/?page_id=210

Weizman – Political Plastic

fluke of nature – you know migrating birds travel through Palestine on the way from Siberia to Africa, because they all travel through what is called the Syrian African crack; it's a kind of navigation and migration route for them. And every year they return to specific hilltops. This is a fantastic spectacle of nature, where for several weeks in fall and spring you have tens, maybe hundreds of thousands of birds circulating in swarms in the air, and somehow landing on those points. One of them is this military base – the Palestinians joke that the Israelis abandoned it because of a kind of 'Hitchcock effect'! And in a sense our claim, the legal issue that we participate in because we designed that site, is not on behalf of people but on behalf of nature. We almost want to say, human rights, its claims and its regime is ridiculous here, it's too late, and anyway it's become part of the language of the occupation itself. So we use birds as the subject of rights in court, something that has rather confused the Israeli authorities. But as you know, this refers to the courts in mediaeval times where animals were standing trial. Our articulation of the idea of return here was a 'return to nature.'

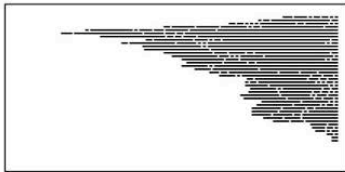
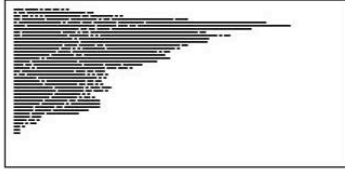
C: An example of real naturalization ...!

EW: Or rather, using nature politically ... We're claiming it back for nature, and designing it simply to be abandoned and used by birds. We design not for a construction but for the controlled disintegration of the building, we accelerate or intervene in the process of its disintegration: Decay as a process of form-making in architecture.

My partner Alessandro Petti is a student and a friend of Giorgio Agamben, and the later is sometimes involved in

A Given Time / A Given Place

Angela Detanico & Rafael Lain



p304. *The World Justified*
 pp306-7. *Disorientation Pattern*
 pp308-17. *Ventania*
 pp318-21. *Zulu Time*

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the curve and eventually to convolute the already twisted curve. In other words, in order to approximate forms, the line of figuration must pass through points of inflections or latitudes of a given form. In this sense, figuration becomes more accurate as it passes more points of inflection or traverses more latitudes; yet to encompass more points means that the line of figuration cannot remain a straight line but must become an increasingly convoluted curve. The painter Francis Bacon presents such a model of smooth figuration in which a form is limitropically approximated through ever swirling and twisting curves. Bacon's method of figuration becomes a function of approximation rather than reproduction and for this reason, it acquires a configuring mechanism that corresponds intimately to that of decay and its smooth gradients: How many points can a line encompass, how many latitudes can be traversed by a differential function, before the line turns into a coiling abomination or the differential function becomes 'differently differently ... differently different'? The thawing meat of Francis Bacon's figures, the oozing colour gradients of his landscapes and the heads whose figural approximations are bundles of coiling tails all suggest a differential function which indexes instant and remote derivatives of a given form in the smoothest fluxional manner.

In decay, the act of figuration corresponds to the act of curve fitting in interpolation. Between two forms, two entities or two horizons, one can only make a continuously smooth connection by encompassing the derivatives which remotely connect these forms or entities together. The remoter and further apart the derivatives of these forms and entities, the smoother and more congruously they can be connected to each other. As the forms or given variables increase, the differential function also becomes more complex and the

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curve for smoothly connecting these variables or given data points becomes increasingly more convoluted. A curious literal depiction of these seething differential curves which connect putrefying forms together in the slimiest and most twisted ways possible can be found in Laurence Housman's intricate art nouveau drawings. *Cauchemar* (which originally appeared in *The Dome*, published by Unicorn Press [1899]) is a nightmare of a slimy nature lost and perplexed in the putrid mazes of its evanescent forms and their derivatives. It depicts a man being consumed by trees, becoming a tree,



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The Islanders: Epilogue¹

Charles Avery

This is the plain where Rocco once found a dead monster.

Within its thinness I am profoundly lost.

Multitudes of round white flowers vanish into the endless ring of light on the horizon, and there is little else, other than the wind, which ruffles the meadows.

Every so often I think I see, at the edge of my vision, some small animal flitting, but I cannot say that any of these sightings are conclusive.

I resolve to fix my eyes downward and comb the ground in search of any sign of diversity.

A little flat stone ... the remains of a small and long-dead creature ... possibly ... strange S-shaped lines in the dust... some foamy substance on a stalk ... another stone ... an old bottle!

When turned upside down and shaken, it yields a few drops of rusty red liquid which disappear into the ground.

¹ Text originally commissioned by *To Hell with Journals* and published as 'The Fancy of the Hunter', in issue 4 (Nov. 2009), eds. C. Arsène-Henry and H. U. Obrist.

I
La théorie est attente, établissement de l'homme
– du réel sans chair, sans phrase, sans monde –
dans la condition de l'attente

II

Le corps de la théorie
 – écriture formulaire, enthousiasme ascétique, surrection populaire ordonnée, coque passant bien dans la lame, voile vibrant dans la brise, montant à l'assaut du vent – est institution de l'attente

III

Cette institution – cet acte – est attentat au plein du monde, à la suffisance des mondains, à la morgue des vivants ; attentat par le vide, la distance prise, la parole laconique, défaite, tirée du silence ; attentat angélique, de l'ange qu'est le je sans moi, le corps sans chair, l'acte sans pratique, la formule sans discours

IV

Austère et théâtral, l'acte de la théorie traverse la pratique, ne s'y engue pas : ne fait pas monde, tranchant de l'aile, du tract épuré, du traité incendiaire, de la joie marine traversant la mélancolie sans bornes

V

Attente instituée, attentat formel, en forme de traversée, de discernement, d'ordre tranchant, sévère, ardent.
 Attentat du je traversant le moi
 (écriture en-je destituant les bavardages du moi).
 Théorie aiguë, armée.
 Théorie-bateau

VI

Les mondains, qui ne savent que les comparaisons joués/jours de la terre et du ciel, parlent d'une navigation blague, d'une blague qui ne fait rien peser

VII

Theorem of Anacharitis :
IL Y A LES VIVANTS, LES MORTS,
ET CEUX QUI VONT SUR LA MER

Gilles Godel
 C'est Pour Qui Le Monde Est Un Bordel Dont La Pratique Est La Patate Et La Philosophie La Grande Miquette
 2010-2011

I
Theory is waiting, it establishes man
–the flesh-less, phrase-less, world-less real–
in the condition of waiting

II

The body of theory
 –formulaic writing, ascetic enthusiasm, ordered popular uprising, hull cutting truly through the waves, sail fluttering in the breeze, taking on the wind– is the institution of waiting

III

This institution –this act– is a full-on attack on the world, on the vanity of the worldly, on the morgue of the living; an attack via the void, the distance taken, via the word that is terse, distraught, dragged from silence; an angelic attack, from the angel that is the I without me, the body without flesh, the act without practice, the formula without discourse

IV

Austere and theatrical, the act of theory crosses practice without getting bogged down in it; it does not become worldly, incisiveness of the wing, of the purified tract, of the incendiary treatise, of maritime joy crossing boundless melancholy

V

An instituted waiting, a formal attack, in the shape of a crossing, a discernment, an order that is cutting, severe, and ardent.
 The attack of the I crossing the ego
 (the writing in I dismissing the chattering of the ego).
 Armed theory, extreme theory.
 Boat-theory

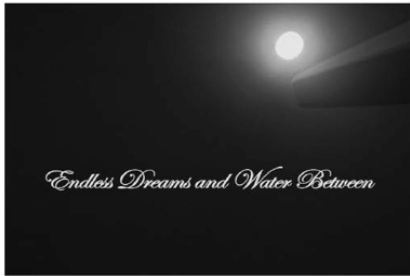
VI

The worldly, who only know of pleasant comparisons between Heaven and Earth, speak of a hot job, a job nobody finds funny

VII

Theorem of Anacharitis
THERE ARE THE LIVING, THE DEAD,
AND THOSE WHO GO TO SEA

Gilles Godel
 It's For Whom The World Is A Bordel Where Practice Is The Where And Philosophy The Great Madam
 2010-2011



Endless Dreams
and Water Between

Renée Green



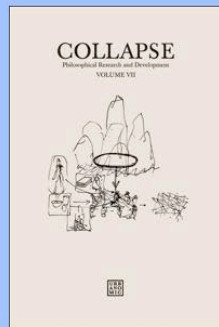
Virilio's 'Bunker Church'. Photograph © Jorge Ayala.

Hatherley – Fossils of Time Future

... the sky playing between the embrasure and the entrance, as if each vast casemate were a little ark, or an empty temple minus the cult [...] these concrete altars built to face the void of the oceanic horizon [...] these solid masses in the hollows of urban spaces, next to the local schoolhouse or bar, shed new light on what 'contemporary' has come to mean. Why continue to be surprised at Le Corbusier's forms of modern architecture? Why speak of 'Brutalism'?

Unlike the post-war rebuilding of blitzed cities along rationalist lines, the Atlantic Wall provided an architectural model for a shattered, traumatised world, and for Virilio at least, a possible model for salvation from this fragmentation and psychosis.

Their very method of construction, to the design of engineers such as Fritz Todt or Ulrich Finsterwalder, suggested the modernity of total war, a science of compaction and impact, where the concrete structure is not a frame, not built from the ground up, but a poured mound, where 'the centre of gravity replaces the foundation'. It is the manner in which the bunker is tailored to protect the human being against modern arms that is the source of its appropriateness for modern design. Far from being an aggressive architecture, for Virilio it is defensive: 'the imposing forms are the consequence of the adversaries' arms, of the fire power of those who rescued us, of our own armies.' The photographs show an architecture which, owing in part to the exigencies of camouflage, manages to be alternately extremely jarring and, in conservative architectural parlance, 'contextual'. While some of the structures seem to be a grotesque metamorphosis of the architecture of the twenties – especially the work of Erich Mendelsohn, with the expressionist curves recalling his



Collapse Volume VII
(July 2011)
'Culinary Materialism'
540pp / ISBN 978-0-9553087-9-6

AO&
Eduardo Viveiros de Castro
Gabriel Catren
John Cochran
Sean Day
Rick Dolphijn
FIELDCLUB
John Gerrard and Michael A. Morris
Carol Goodden
Iain Hamilton Grant
Manabrata Guha
Dorothee Legrand
Vanina Leschziner and Andrew Dakin
Dan Mellamphy and Nandita Biswas Mellamphy
Jeremy Millar
Eugene Thacker
Richard Wrangham
Fernando Zalamea.

**Research and
Development**

Consistency

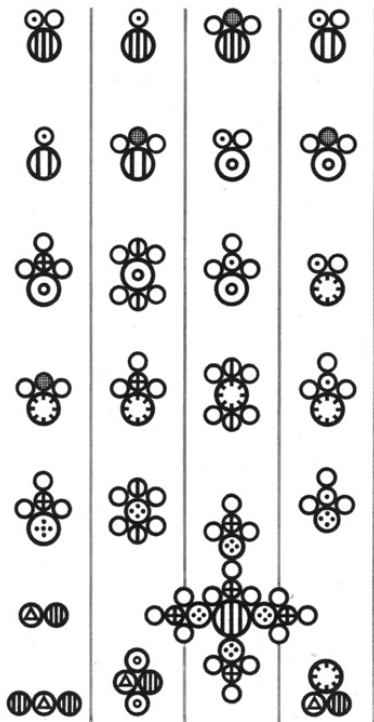
**Forced
Collaboration
/ Interrupted
Relay**

Integrity

And the next volume, 'Culinary Materialism', which will appear in July 2011, is on cookery, in the broadest possible sense ...

We were talking yesterday about how **Collapse** would like to create a space for thought outside the pressure and the dictatorship of the urgency of the political; how it would like to be able to question premises and to escape from the obligation to immediately politicize, that is so endemic now. This volume on cookery is kind of an ultimate provocation to this 'Badiouist' trend – to take the most domestic, inoffensive subject ...

This volume is the first in which we are not only including but participating in the production of original work by an artist, a print by the british artist Jeremy Millar, which Urbanomic is producing with some help from some friends, on a hand press, in an edition of 1000, which will be inserted into the volume.



The Chemical Paradigm

Interview with Iain Hamilton Grant

Iain Hamilton Grant, one of the four philosophers who spearheaded 'Speculative Realism',¹ is distinguished by being the sole proponent among them of a renewed philosophy of nature. He has argued convincingly² for the erroneousness of the modern and contemporary dismissal of the Naturphilosophen who sought to think the absolute according to the generative power of nature, integrating knowledge of the contemporary deliverances of the sciences into their speculative systems.

Collapse spoke to Grant about this indistinction between philosophy and science, about the particular importance of chemistry as a new model for the thinking of nature, and about the pertinence of the culinary for a contemporary synthetic philosophy.

1. See Appendix to **COLLAPSE III**.

2. See I. H. Grant, *Philosophies of Nature after Schelling*, 2nd edition (London: Continuum, 2008), 19-21.

nitrogen or phosphorus within an ecosystem causing algal blooms which consume all available oxygen, thereby causing the death of all other organisms in the area.

1980

World population stands at circa 4,400 million. Average meat consumption in the United States stands at 45kg per person.

1980

61 million tonnes of nitrogen fertiliser are used worldwide.

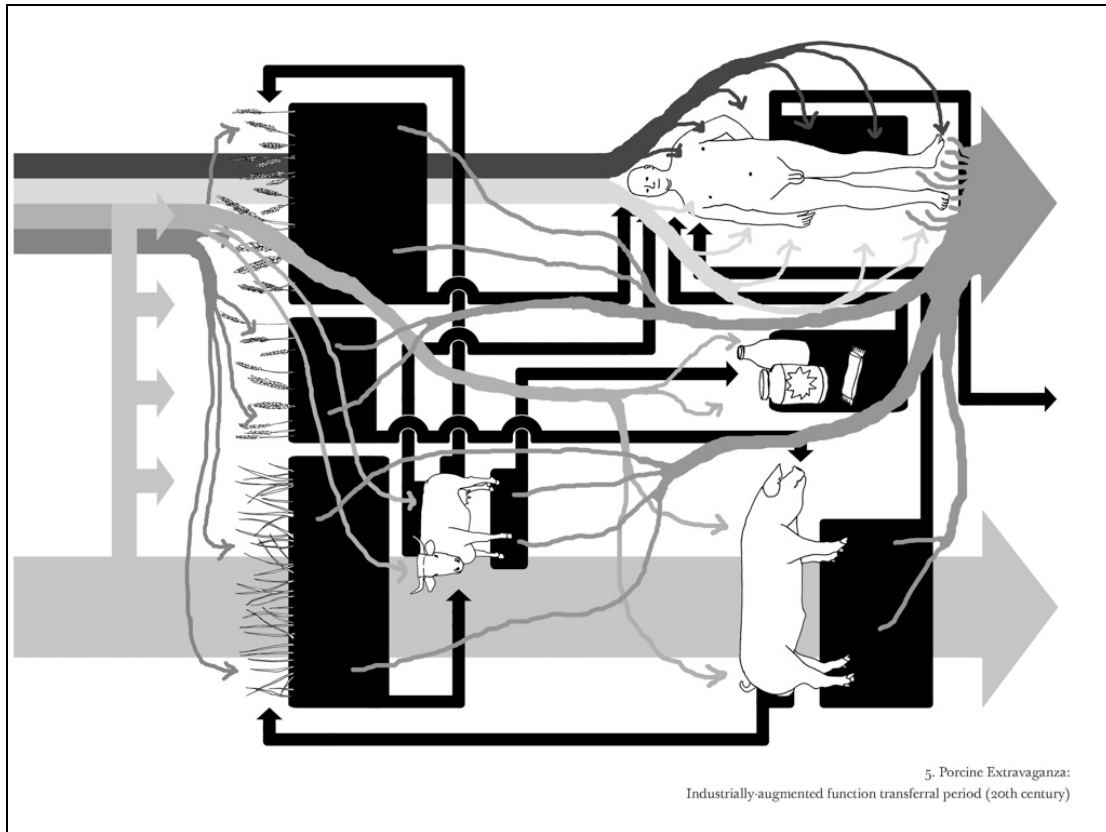
1990

Iraq invades Kuwait, leading to the First Gulf War. 79 million tonnes of nitrogen fertiliser are used worldwide. The amount of fixed nitrogen used in farming in the period 1980-1990 exceeds all previous use prior to 1980.

Somewhere between 50-60% of the global population now rely on fertilizer to eat. The nitrogen used in ammonia manufacture is derived exclusively from fossil fuels: as a consequence, the price of fertilizer has run parallel to that of oil for more than 70 years.

Facing Page:
 Top: *Sow Farm (near Libbey, Oklahoma)*, 2009, Realtime 3D projection, 400 x 300 cm. Installation view, Thomas Dane Gallery, London, UK, November 2010.
 Bottom: Artist's photographic documentation for *Sow Farm (near Libbey, Oklahoma)*, 2009.





BHUT JOLOKIA ASAR¹

250g Bhut chili peppers
 1/2 tsp crushed fenugreek seeds
 3 tbsps yellow crushed mustard seeds
 1/2 tsp turmeric powder
 1/2 tbsps crushed fennel seeds
 1 tbsps salt
 1/4 cup lemon juice
 1/2 cup mustard oil
 1 sterilized glass jar

Wipe the chillies with damp clean cloth and let them dry completely;
 Cut the chillies into 1 cm small pieces;
 Mix all the spices and salt together;
 Mix with the chillies;
 Transfer into a clean and dry airtight glass container;
 Add freshly squeezed lemon juice and oil;
 Cover with the lid tightly;
 Shake the bottle vigorously;
 Keep in the sun, covered by a netted lid, for 7-8 days.

1. Recipe from 'AssamFoodie's Blog', at <http://assamfoodie.wordpress.com/some-like-it-hot/>. Last accessed on April 10, 2011. Note: The word 'asar' is a cognate of the Bengali word 'achar' and the Hindi-Devnagiri word 'achar', which means 'pickle'. We will have occasion to review the implications of the word 'pickle', beyond its mere culinary sense, below.

COLLAPSE VII

Vague Weaponizations or, the Chemistry of Para-Tactical Engagements²

Manabrata Guha

There are laws of warfare, and it often happens that fidelity to an oath given to an enemy must be kept...[A] pirate [however] is not included in the number of lawful enemies, but is a common enemy of all. With him there ought not to be any pledged word, nor any oath mutually binding.

MARCUS TULLIUS CICERO, DE OFFICIIS (ON DUTIES)³

The legacy of the Copernican Revolution – that is the revolution by and according to the open universe – is comprised of three components: The speculative drive of 'an extreme line of thought', the revolutionary vocation of 'disturbing the peace of this world in still another way' and the true-to-the-universe logic of delivering all expressions of isolation and discreteness 'remorselessly into the open'.

REZA NEGARESTANI, GLOBE OF REVOLUTION⁴

2. This essay could not have been written without the encouragement, assistance, intervention and keen insight of Reza Negarestani. Thanks are also due to Robin Mackay for proposing the subject of the essay, and for inviting me to explore what, to me, are some rather frighteningly-disorienting lines of thought and experimentation.

3. Quoted in D. Heller-Roazen, *The Enemy of All: Piracy and the Law of Nations*, (New York: Zone Books, 2009), 16.

4. R. Negarestani, 'Globe of Revolution: An Afterthought on Geophilosophical Realism', in T. Huber (Ed.), *Realismus Jetzt!*, (Berlin: Merve Verlag, forthcoming 2011). In order of the quotes: S. Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure*

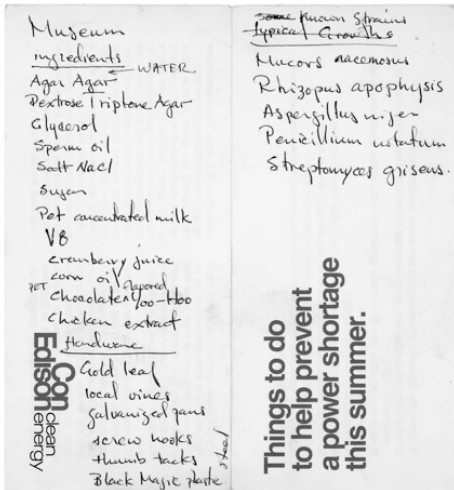
FOOD and the City

Interview with Carol Goodden

In 1971 Gordon Matta-Clark and Carol Goodden founded FOOD. Part restaurant, part art project, and offering employment to artists, FOOD provided a space for social, architectural and culinary experimentation and a meeting place for the artistic community.

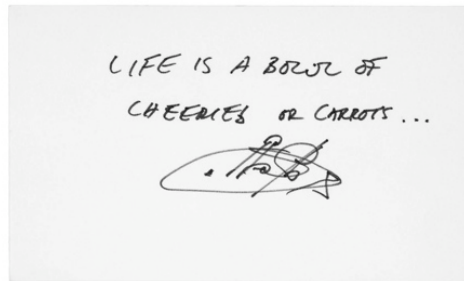
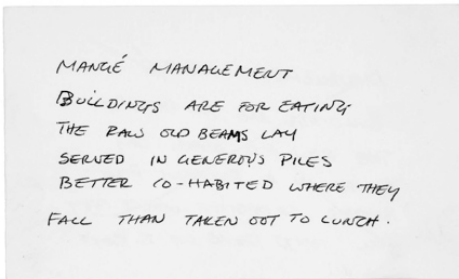
The development of the FOOD project can be seen in the context of Matta-Clark's earlier work, in which there seem to be several levels to the link between architecture and cooking: At points the artist seems to have understood cities and urbanisation as a kind of metabolism or digestion process (the movement from centre to periphery, gentrification, transformation of neighbourhoods). But we should also consider Matta-Clark's long-standing interest in alchemy: Throughout autumn and winter 1969, 'alchemical' apparatuses were bubbling away in his New York loft, works such as Photo-Fry employed processes of transformation that were explicitly 'culinary', and the remainder of a series of works in which agar was used to grow various substances were exhibited in the 1970 show Museum. At the time Matta-Clark

All Images: Succession de Gordon Matta-Clark en dépôt au Centre Canadien d'Architecture, Montréal / Estate of Gordon Matta-Clark on deposit at the Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal.

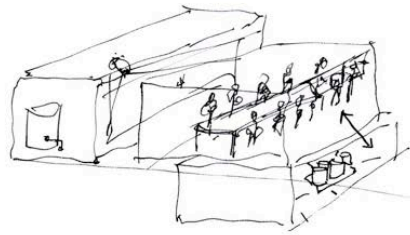


into booklet-sized swatches, bound them, and gave the booklets away.

This constant migration in his mind, the evolution of everything, fuelled his interest in saving pieces of abandoned buildings, or buildings threatened with demolition. Thus he cut one building in half, transforming it; he cut pieces out of floors of buildings; he cut holes and slices through buildings, watching how the light changed and *tromp l'oeil* effects were produced; he decapitated a building in Italy and followed the light trails across the walls with cuts; he cut a corkscrew swatch through the old Beaubourg, and so on. Gordon's mind was extremely complex. He never saw or thought about anything singly. For instance in this note - 'Mangé management': it's a play on words,



using the whole thought: *Mangé* could have become *ménage*, or *ménage à trois*, but he apparently was in FOOD when he wrote this, or thinking of FOOD. This constant combining of sights and thoughts, from one subject to another, was replete in his speech as well, making it quite impossible to understand what he was talking about. Many times one sentence or reference would appear in a speech today and a week later another reference to that subject but within an entirely different context, so that one could begin to see that his mind worked in a circular pattern and could almost only be followed by living constantly with him. 'Life is a bowl of cherries or carrots...' The first is simply a trite phrase and then it is combined with what he daily saw at FOOD.



brush everything, hose everything down; we brought the kitchen equipment together bit by bit; and then brought in the theatrical lighting, to establish a situation for eating. To make it somewhere where people, even if they first think 'what is this place?', eventually feel comfortable and get to talk to each other because they feel at ease in it, they don't feel the urge to leave.

This meticulous preparation plays a significant role in a lot of projects we do. It's the kind of work you probably wouldn't normally want to do; but by doing this, spending days on our knees scrubbing, in cleaning a space we also conquer the site. That's really important for us, in order to get the confidence as to how we can act after that in here.

C: To make the space into your own environment ...



The sequence of courses is directly related to each event's dramaturgy. There is a formal logic, an arc. We usually start with an empty table, and at first, no drinks will be served. The first course of a prologue of liquids would be a glass of tap water, followed by a saltless, basic root vegetable broth and some more intense stocks. Then the diners get the first glass of wine, as a course on its own, and the food will subsequently become more solid, travelling through plants and animals of the season.

C: If the necessity to feel 'related' to each ingredient can be interpreted as some kind of ethical intervention or idea of how our relationship to food 'should' be, isn't it one that's idealistic, in the sense that no urban population could sustain these kinds of direct relationships? Do you see it as a model in that way?

AO&: No, not at all; it's a perversion, a luxury. We started to work like this in order to define a new kind of luxury. It's not political, it's not the same as slow food, the organic movement, and so on. It wouldn't make sense to propagate this in other societies that are not like ours, you know. You can interpret it as a political thing – a lot of people do – but it didn't originate like that. Food and its quality is very standardized nowadays, even in gourmet restaurants.

Reason in the Roasting of Eggs

Richard Wrangham

To Roast Eggs.

Make a puncture in the large end of the egg, then pour water over it, and cover it in hot ashes in front of the fire, from whence you may easily take it when done.

Mary Mason, *The Young Housewife's Counsellor and Friend: Containing Directions in Every Department of Housekeeping, including the Duties of Wife and Mother* (NY: Protestant Episcopal Church Book Society), 1875.

In the eighteenth century egg-roasting was a sufficiently puzzling activity that it inspired a familiar saying, 'There is reason in the roasting of eggs'. The aphorism was intended to justify the most arcane of pursuits, but actually the reason for roasting eggs has been unknown until recently. There is indeed a good nutritional explanation for this now-vanished culinary tradition, as there is for cooking any other food: cooked food gives us more energy than we would get by eating the same food raw. Furthermore, our consumption of cooked food makes possible not just our high energy budgets, but also the extreme size of our brains. Accordingly the notion of 'reason in the roasting of eggs' includes a second meaning beyond the assertion of mere utility. It encapsulates my claim that the evolution of human mental powers has depended on our ancestors' food being cooked.

an ordered series of resemblances running through all living things.⁶ This continuum spanned the four regions of the natural world corresponding with the classical elements fire, air, water, and earth, each of which was characterized by one of the four possible combinations of humoral qualities. It followed that organisms generally acquired the humoral qualities of the region in which they resided – for example, because water is cold and moist, fish tend to be cold and moist.⁷ Each of the four possible combinations of the qualities was thought to be responsible for the production of a different dominant humour, or internal bodily fluid, which in turn dictated an organism's temperament, or predisposition to particular emotions, behaviours, and illnesses.

The health of human beings, it was believed at the time, depended on the maintenance of the ideal humoral balance particular to the species – a combination of hot and moist qualities. One's faulty lifestyle was thought to be the main cause of humoral

6. A. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea* [1936] (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970). See N. Cusanus, *De docta ignorantia* [1440] (Lipsiae: In Aedibus Felicis Meiner, 1932) for a renowned example of medieval thought, and in particular an elaboration of the philosophical principles underpinning the Great Chain of Being.

7. One could not assume, however, that all organisms residing in the same elemental region possessed the same humoral balance, for qualitative variance exists within a given elemental region (i.e. some bodies of water are colder than others, just as some sections of the same water body are colder than others), and other factors including age, sex, and form could affect the humoral qualities of an organism.

Leschziner & Dakin – Theorizing Cuisine

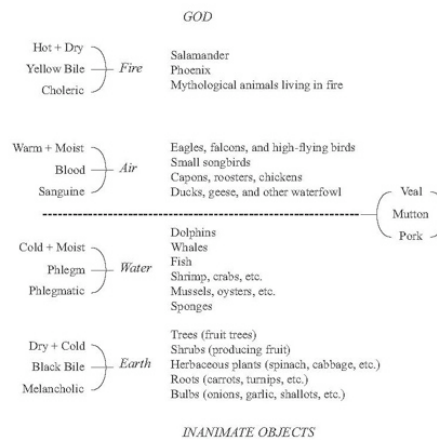


Figure 1. The table of humours and The Great Chain of Being.

imbalance, which in turn led to illness.⁸ The regulation of diet, being a fundamental part of an individual's lifestyle, was therefore regarded as the primary

8. R. Porter, *Disease, Medicine and Society in England, 1550–1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

The Human Sensoria and a
Synaesthetic Approach to Cooking

Sean A. Day,
with contributions courtesy of
James Wannerton

LIGHT CYAN BLUE

- Breast of chicken, one per serving
- Vanilla ice cream (high quality real vanilla, not cheap artificial stuff)
- Vanilla extract or, preferably, beans
- Frozen orange juice concentrate
- Brown sugar
- Corn starch

The breast of chicken can be with or without bone, or may be half of a split chicken, including a leg, etc. – it really doesn't matter. What is important is that the skin and fat remain.

For the orange sauce, in a small pot, on low heat, warm up half a can of the orange juice concentrate, mixing in a teaspoon or two of brown sugar. The sauce should be sour, not sweetened with the brown sugar; the sugar is only there to add a touch of flavour, not sweetness. Add corn starch to the sauce to thicken it until the viscosity is similar to thick molasses. Maintain on a very low heat or otherwise keep warm until serving.

Grill the chicken to preference. However, the skin should be crispy and the meat should remain very fatty; retain the fat, rather than draining, as needed.

The vanilla ice cream should be very cold and hard, such that it scoops into balls and will take longer to melt.

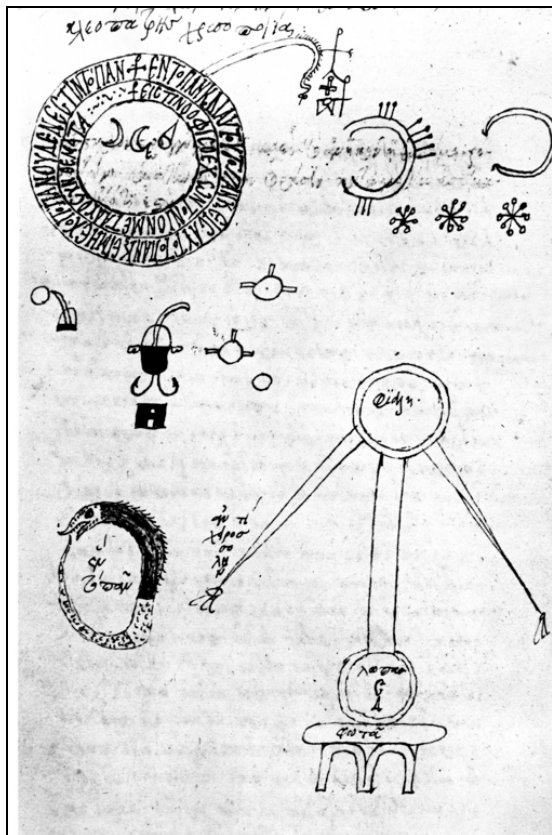
The chicken should be served hot (but not excessively so), right off the grill (with a little pouring of fat over it, if desired), topped immediately with one or two scoops of ice cream sprinkled with just a bit of vanilla, this all topped with enough orange sauce to cover part of the chicken and ice cream but not to drown it. Speed is of the essence here, as the idea is for the diner to be able to experience the contrasting heat of the chicken and the coldness of the ice cream for as long as possible before temperatures equalize. Serve with a glass of light (wheat) beer flavoured with lemon, and a glass of red wine.

[T]hat perceptions are not absolutely determinate and singular is obvious from the fact that each sense is an abstracting mechanism. Sight by itself informs us only of colors and forms. No one can pretend that the images of sight are determinate in reference to taste. They are, therefore, so far general that they are neither sweet nor non-sweet, bitter nor non-bitter, having savor nor insipid.

CHARLES SANDERS PEIRCE, 1868

THE SENSES, COOKING, FOOD, AND EATING

Which sensory modalities are involved in 'eating'? Taste, or even the combination of taste with smell; we might also consider at least the components of temperature (which divides into at least two separate senses), vision (which itself is comprised of at least four



Ec[h]ology of the Désêtre

Dan Mellamphy and
Nandita Biswas Mellamphy

Though the logos is common to all, the many live as if they had a wisdom of their own.

HERACLITUS

under such flattering colour and repainting, the terrible original text homo natura must again be recognized

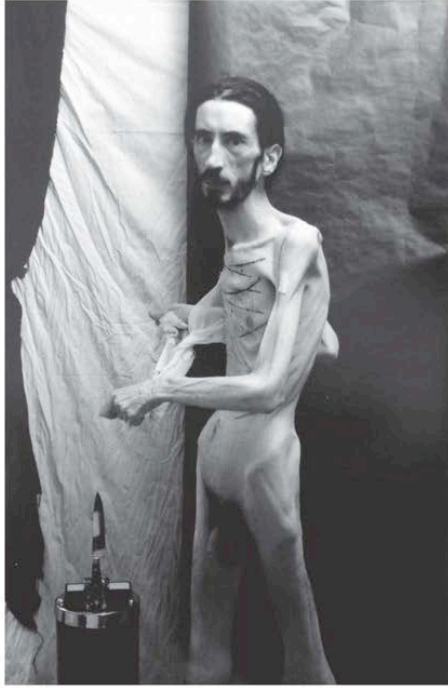
NIETZSCHE

The following is a work of geo-philosophy beyond the bounds of Friedrich Nietzsche (its 'founder' according to Deleuze and Guattari) yet very much in the spirit of his Zarathustra: 'true to the earth'² and its 'terrible text'.³ What is terrible about the terrible text that is true to the earth is that, with and in it, there

1. G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1991), 82.

2. F. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*, Prologue §3: 'I implore you, my brothers, remain true to the earth!'

3. F. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, §230.



David Nebreda, *Le cadeau de la mère. Le couteau nouveau portant mon nom.*
 [The gift of the mother. The new knife having my name]
 (D. Nebreda, *Autoportraits*, 62). ©2000 Éditions Léo Scheer

Legrand – Ex-Nihilo

an image of myself which must not only be perfectly composed [...] but also obey to a precise rule of reflection²⁶

Once the mental image has been perfectly constructed, measured and justified, I use my camera.²⁷

He insists:

my body is only an instrument whose control must always be subjected to an idea of general discipline.²⁸ Self-portrait is an exercise of reflection and of internal organization, much more than an exercise of representation [...]. Self-portrait can be neither biographical, nor artistic, nor cathartic, nor complicit [...]. The self-portrayed body [...] must be calm and precise.²⁹

For that to happen,

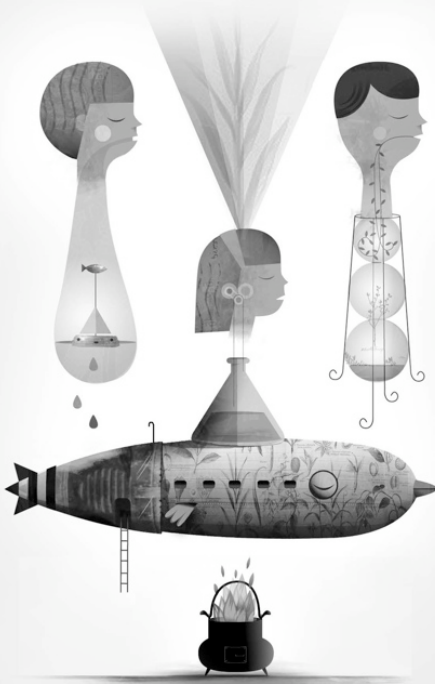
the first decision contents itself with ceasing (silence, lack of hygiene, of food, of movement, of clothes...), when this is not enough anymore, one must open oneself, lacerate oneself, bite oneself, flog oneself, burn oneself, maintain the wounds infected [...]. The body must exhaust itself, for the foreign matter to be

26. *Ibid.*, 22.

27. *Ibid.*, 23.

28. *Ibid.*, 26.

29. *Ibid.*, 29.



COLLAPSE VII

On Philosophical Alchemy, or
 Why All Chimeric Compositions are
 Philosophical Stones

Gabriel Catren

*Illustration by Cristian Turdera*¹

*If you have a philosophical stone, do you therefore also
 have a mathematical and artistic stone? etc.*

NOVALIS²

*I have always dreamed and attempted something else, with
 the patience of an alchemist, ready to sacrifice all vanity and
 all satisfaction, as in the past one burned his furniture and
 the beams of his roof, to feed the furnace of the Great Work.*

MALLARMÉ³

1. <http://www.cristianturdera.com/>.

2. Novalis, *Notes for a Romantic Encyclopaedia, Das Allgemeine Brouillon*, trans. E.W. Wood (Albany, State University of New York Press, 2007), 16.

3. S. Mallarmé, "Lettre à Paul Verlaine, 16 novembre 1885", in S. Mallarmé, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. B. Marchal (Paris : Gallimard, 1990), tome 1, 789.

ANALYTICAL JELLY

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Gelatine (30g) | Its translucent, tasteless structure will be essential. |
| Lemon Juice (100ml) | Will help bring about the aseptic, astringent product desired. |
| Water (400ml) | What can be said? Will wash away all obscurities. |
| Plain cream (80g) | Whiteness of 'white' will ensure a firm blend. |
| Sugar (little spoon) | To keep open a door to 'other worlds'. |

Dissolve the gelatine in water, add the lemon juice, the cream, put in a pan, soak and boil. Throw away the sugar, no one is looking. Allow to cool. Sell it as a magnificent dish, whose preparation involved great difficulties. Make its aura shine. Enjoy with your closest friends and distribute to the World.

TRANSMODERN TATIN

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| Flour (330g) | Will bring you down to Earth. |
| Butter (330g) | Worst will be the best. |
| Icing sugar (110g) | Nature and artifice will come together. |
| Egg yolks (3) | Life will have to surface. |
| Apples (6) | What can be said? Will obscure all. |

Do not worry much about the preparation. Forget good orders and canonical behaviours. Just do it. Or, better, travel to France, recall that you are still an heir of Romanticism, and, in some remote village, ask for a wonderful *Tarte Tatin*.

Analytical Jelly and Transmodern Tatin: Two Trivial Recipes

Fernando Zalamea

Good cooking comes from small villages and long traditions. One cannot favour, for instance, France's *petite cuisine* over its *cuisine villageoise*. A solid, rooted, generous, *confit de canard aux lentilles*, deliciously magnified in Moissac, far exceeds a light, pretentious, stingy, *rémoulade de tourteau à l'aneth, sauce fleurlette citronnée*, served at Taillevent's. But philosophy in the twentieth century has followed fashions far meaner than those of the *petite cuisine*. The analytical (and anglosaxon) obsession with language and (classical) logic has obscured many earlier, wider pursuits of knowledge, related to a *necessary* blend of philosophy with creative mathematics, chemistry, art and literature. Nevertheless, well beyond *petite* analytical hunting estates, some giant critics stood firm: Warburg, Florenskij, Benjamin, Cassirer, Merleau-Ponty, Blumenberg, to

EXPERIMENTS TOUCHING BURIALS
FRANCIS BACON¹*Experiments in consort touching burials or infusions of divers bodies in earth.*

376. Burials in earth serve for preservation, and for condensation, and for induration of bodies. And if you intend condensation or induration, you may bury the bodies so as earth may touch them: as if you will make artificial porcelane, &c. And the like you may do for conservation, if the bodies be hard and solid; as clay, wood, &c. But if you intend preservation of bodies more soft and tender, then you must do one of these two: either you must put them in cases, whereby they may not touch the earth, or else you must vault the earth, whereby it may hang over them and not touch them: for if the earth touch them, it will do more hurt by the moisture, causing them to putrefy, than good by the virtual cold, to conserve them, except the earth be very dry and sandy.

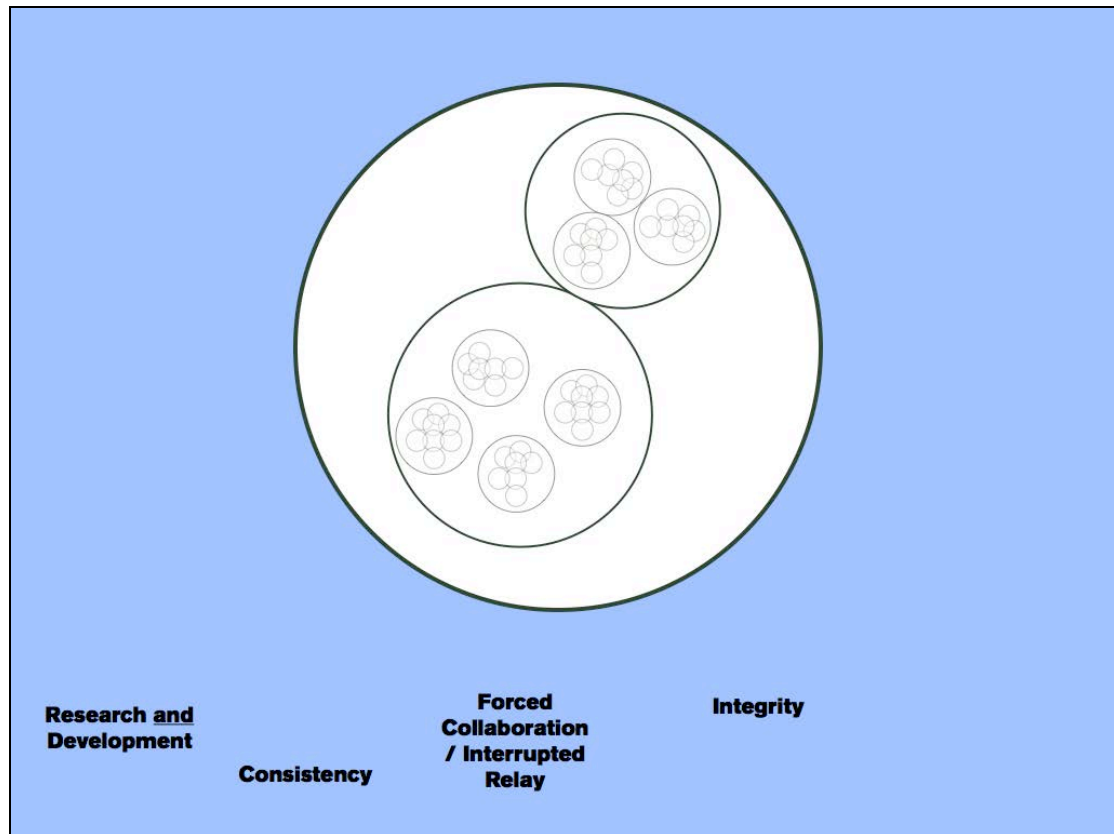
377. An orange, lemon, and apple, wrapt in a linen cloth, being buried for a fortnight's space four foot deep within the earth, though it were in a moist place, and a rainy time, yet came forth noways mouldy or rotten, but were become a little harder than they were; otherwise fresh in their colour; but their juice somewhat flatted. But with the burial of a fortnight more they became putrefied.

1. In *Phenomena of the Universe or Natural History for the Building Up of Philosophy* (1607).

378. A bottle of beer, buried in like manner as before, became more lively, better tasted, and clearer than it was. And a bottle of wine in like manner. A bottle of vinegar so buried came forth more lively and more odoriferous, smelling almost like a violet. And after the whole month's burial, all the three came forth as fresh and lively, if not better than before.

379. It were a profitable experiment to preserve oranges, lemons, and pomegranates, till summer, for then their price will be mightily increased. This may be done, if you put them in a pot or vessel well covered, that the moisture of the earth come not at them; or else by putting them in a conservatory of snow. And generally, whosoever will make experiments of cold, let him be provided of three things; a conservatory of snow; a good large vault, twenty foot at least under the ground; and a deep well.

380. There hath been a tradition, that pearl, and coral, and turquois-stone, that have lost their colours, may be recovered by burying in the earth, which is a thing of great profit, if it would sort: but upon trial of six weeks' burial, there followed no effect. It were good to try it in a deep well, or in a conservatory of snow; there the cold may be more constringent; and so make the body more united, and thereby more resplendent.

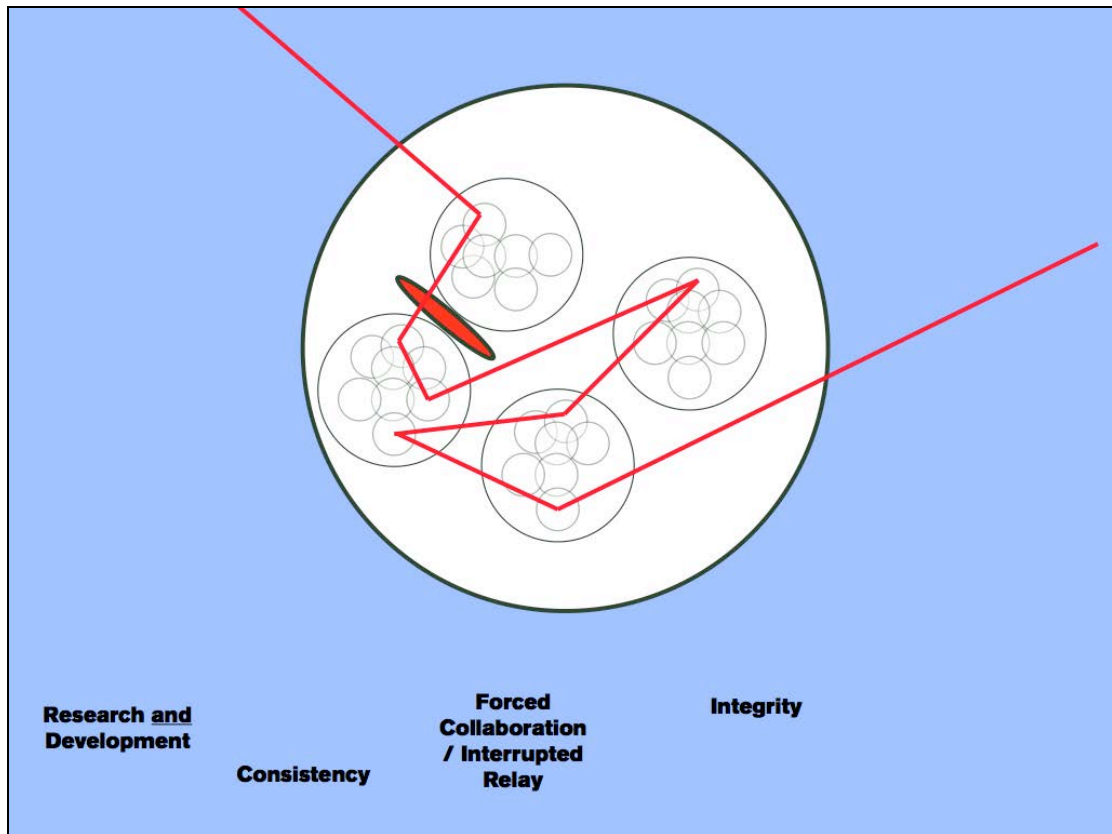


So, let's return to the model of knowledge that we were trying to overcome.

To recap: A journal might be understood as a microcosm of the university model of knowledge: as such defining a discursive space into which all contributions have to fit, a criteria which all the contents have to follow, a homogeneity and containment ensured by the institutional editorial structure.

Again, arguably, the model here is to continually reconstitute a global image of thought; to continually patch up and fill in the 'sphere of knowledge' which can be passed down to the next generation, with subdisciplines, and sub-subdisciplines, etc. to infinity. The job of each generation of academics is to fill in the gaps more, to secure the sphere of knowledge for perpetuity; and for the adventurous, to move to the edges and create interdisciplinary communications.

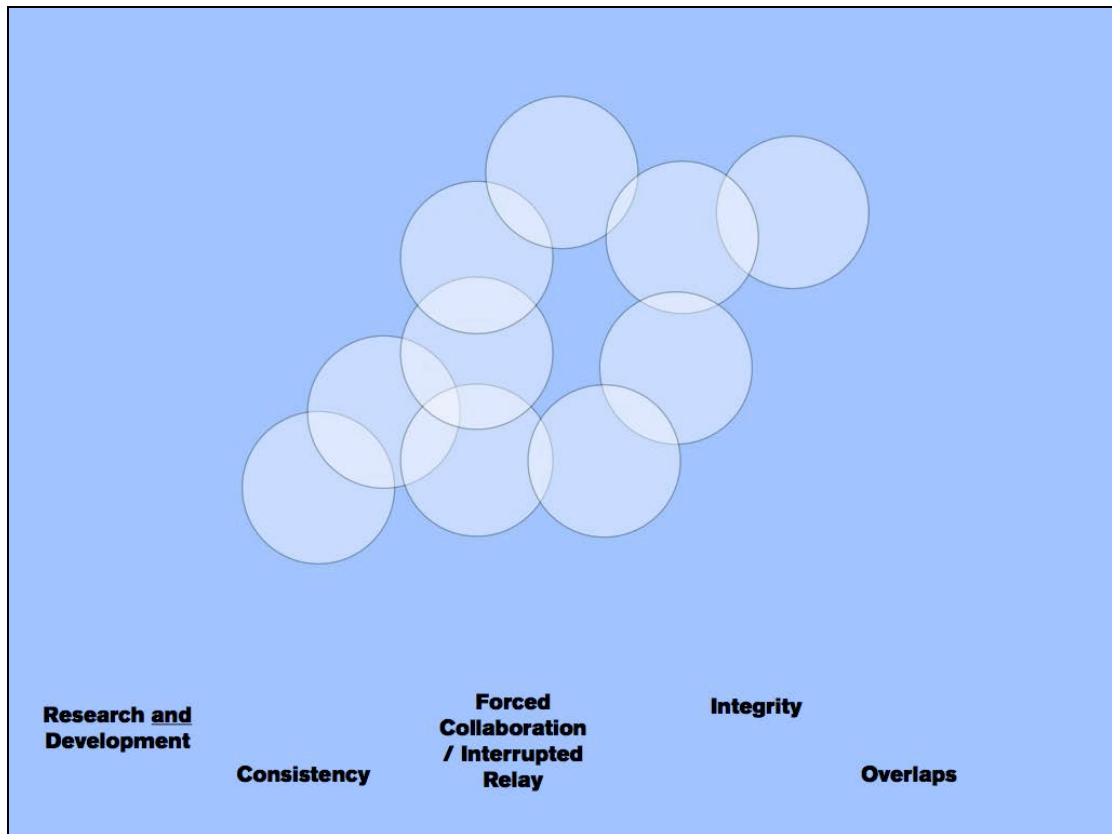
As I've said, I find ultra-specialisation, and the types of couterintuitive knowledge it produces, fascinating – of course I want to know about the world. But somehow I want a synthesis, an uneven but consistent synthesis, and to produce something that itself has an effect on the configuration of knowledge.



Now, to really make concepts *move* demands the discovery of, or the construction of an *internal periphery* which disregards this global structure, or better, which unfolds it so as to experimentally refold its elements together in different ways.

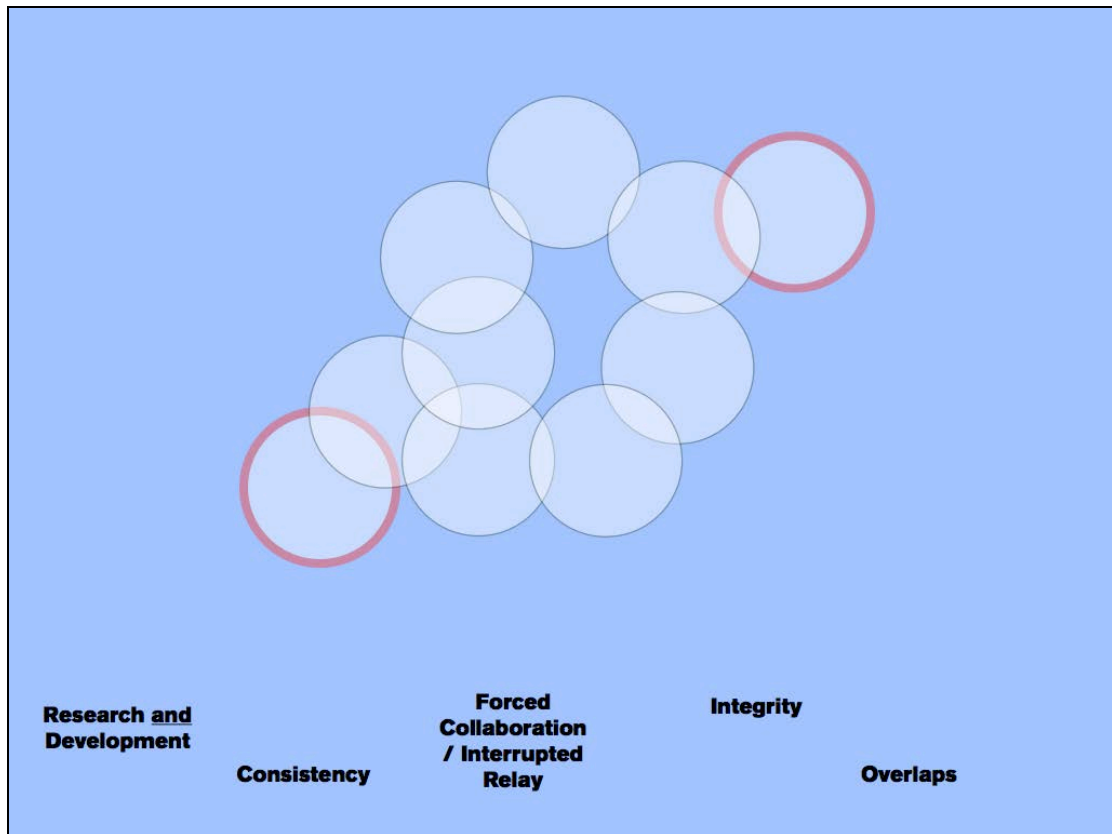
It remakes the image of thought according to a new history, in which elements that previously seemed to have no connection to each other, are synthesized and connected and transform, even if in a small way, our way of thinking about the world.

So what is this model? Remember, this is really a retrospective reconstruction, that emerged from those first two positive and negative tasks, and which has now become a working model.

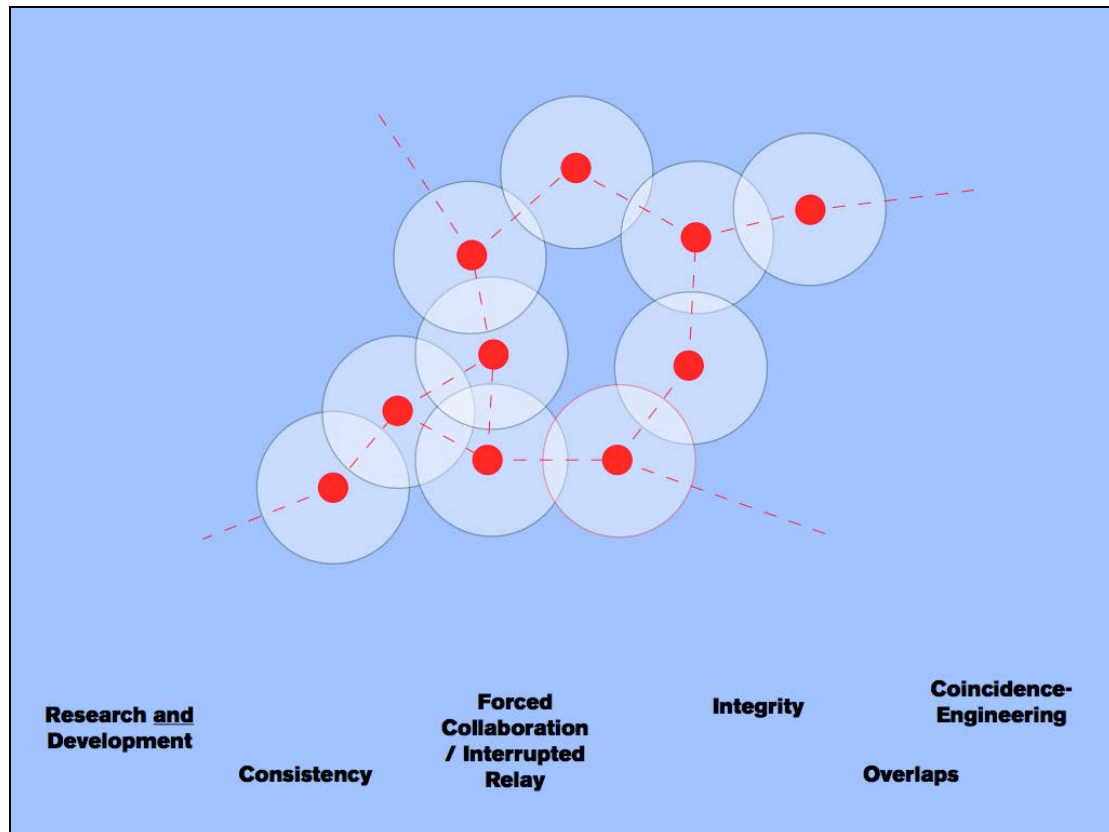


In **Collapse**, each contribution overlaps with at least one other, so that there is a kind of distributive structure loosely held together by these partial overlaps:

Collapse is therefore defined by nature of this series of overlaps, not (as in the traditional journal model) by a circumscription of the space. It is the overlaps that address fundamental questions in philosophy, and it is in the overlapping that those questions gain some new life, some new energy: they only come alive when they are 'between two', an intersection of at least two different, overlapping approaches. Therefore as a 'whole', each volume is best seen through the model of *montage*, where it is the splices between the elements that really 'produce'.



This has the interesting consequence that any two contributions taken on their own may appear to have strictly nothing to do with each other. Say, in **Collapse II**, an article on Islamic theology and an interview with a physicist. Or **Collapse VI**: a computational ecologist and medievalist scholar. Or in **Collapse VII**: a synaesthete, a chef, and a student of postmodern warfare. But through the maximally broad use of a theme, and a series of conceptual overlaps, a chain is built between them:

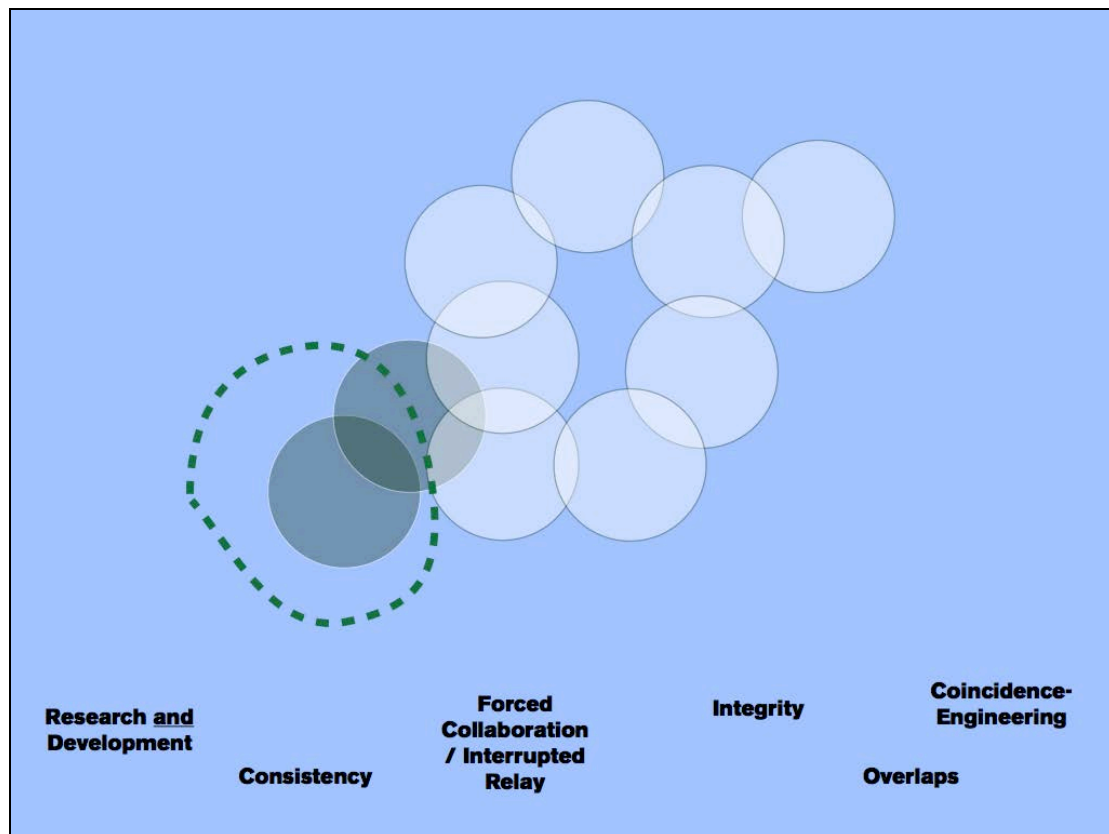


So this is the way in which editing or curation of each volume is a creative act - in so far as to create is to synthesise, to connect elements in a new way.

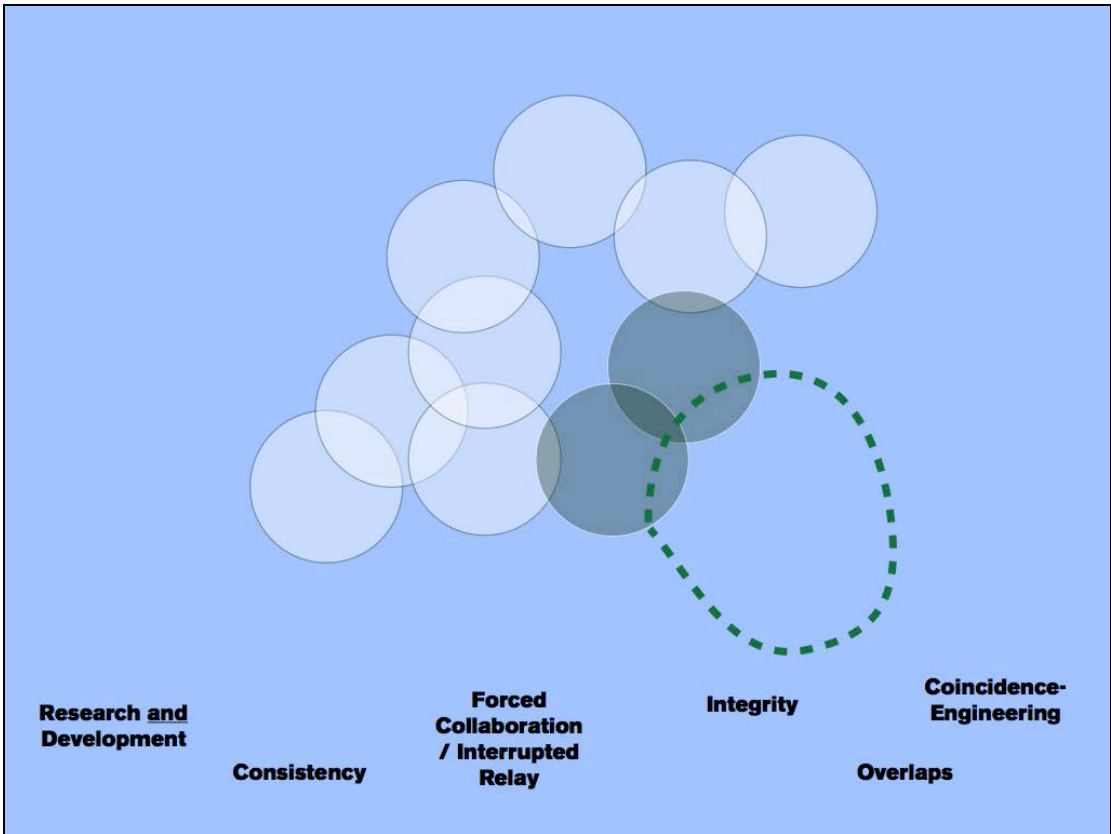
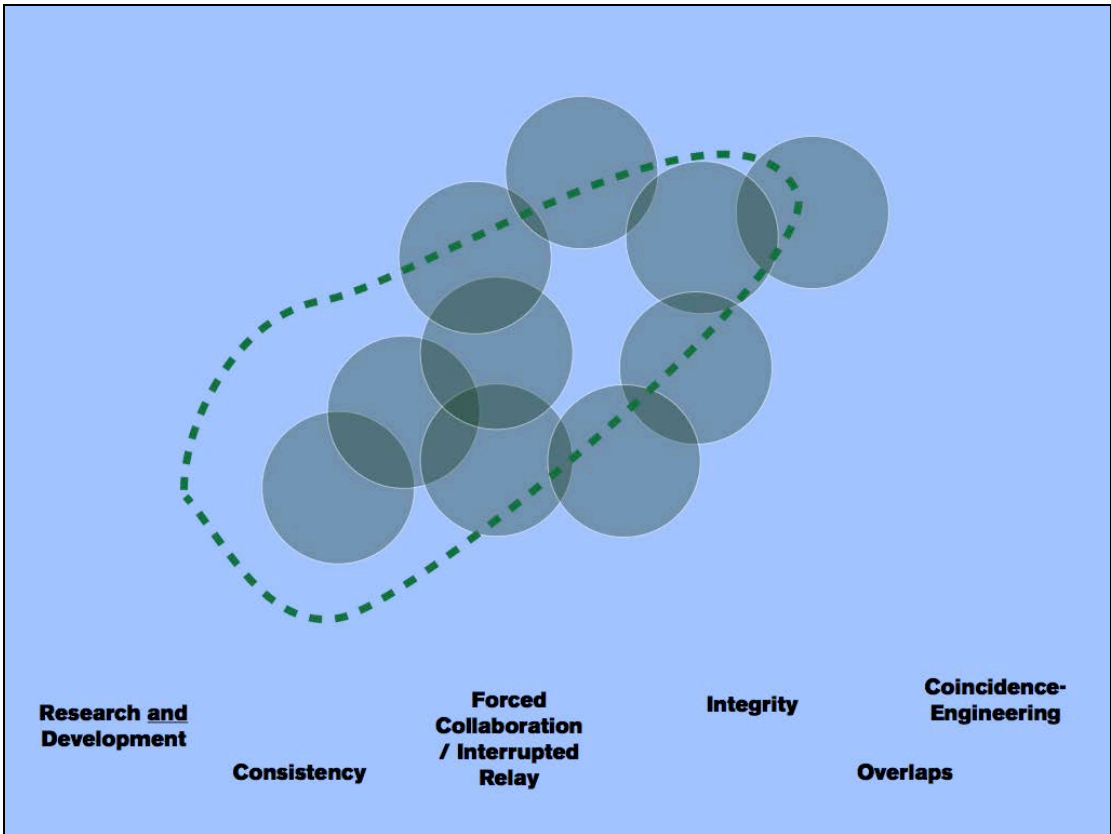
But then, each volume seems somehow to build itself, and always ends up surprising the editor(s). It seems that just by existing as a virtual entity with the capacity to make these kind of connections, **Collapse** attracts contributors (there has never been an open call for papers) who are not afraid of this, who are open to being 'overlapped' in some surprising way, inserted into a chain of concepts which may change the way they themselves think about their own work.

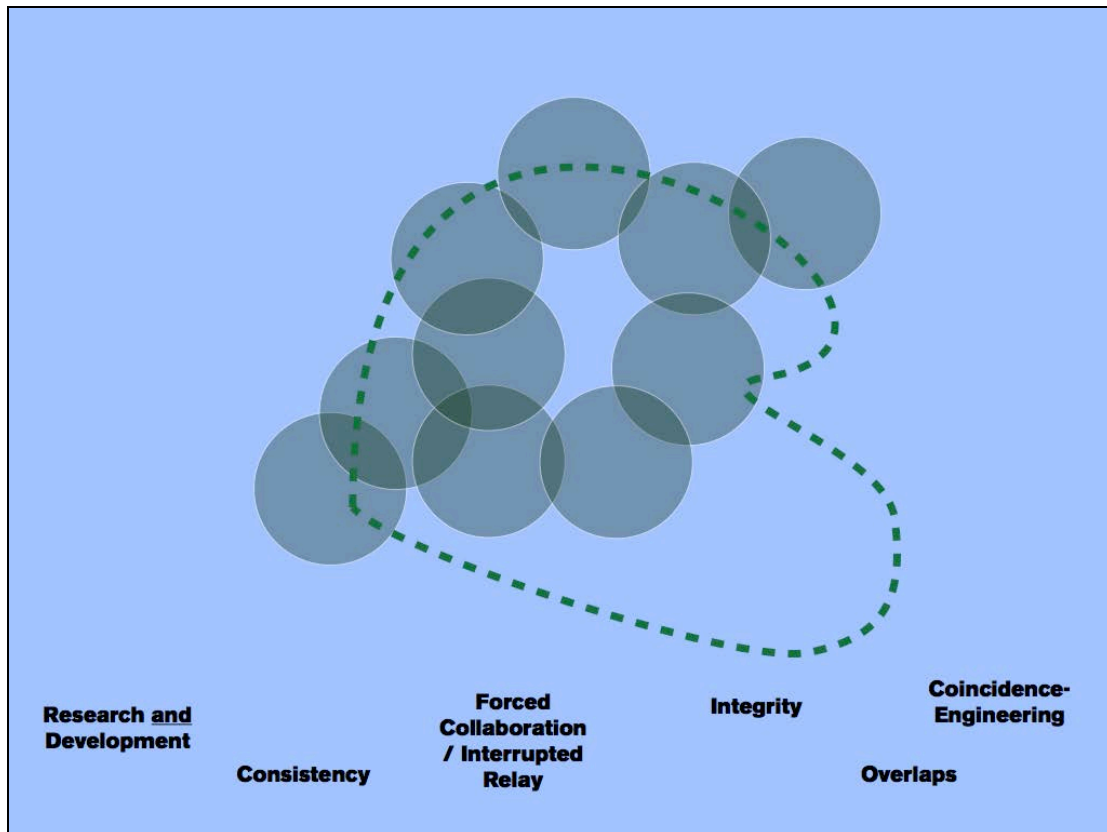
It's actually really difficult to describe, in any particular case, how this inter-linkage works. In fact, it's in the work of writing the introduction that the editor or editors have to clarify this to themselves. The introduction is a very important part of the volume, it traces the connections through all of the contents and tries to give an overview of what has been achieved conceptually. This is always retrospective, it's always a discovery of what has happened, in the process of editing.

Now, what effect does this have on the audience, and in fact, as I have realized, on *creating* a new audience, a new constituency?



Any one reader is unlikely to be familiar with all the contributors – they may recognise one or two, which will hopefully attract them to read **Collapse**; but having bought the volume their eyes inevitably will wander to the other contributors, and so hopefully the reader's horizon is somehow 'stretched' by their being hooked into this chain of concepts.





And in fact this is what I find so objectionable about academic journals – you know exactly what circle the contributions are going to fall into, and such journals are read not for pleasure or to learn anything new, but out of a kind of duty to ‘keep up’ with all the little modifications within a given sphere of knowledge. But then the same is true of glossy magazines (whoever was surprised by Vogue?) – the two are a sort of mirror image of each other, and somehow wanting to fulfill the promise of both, **Collapse** also tries to avoid the disappointing reality of both.

So structurally, **Collapse** is set up as a kind of coincidence-engineering machine.

And once again, let’s return to the point about commitment and integrity:

COMMITMENT

1. Has to be a physical object – there is a ‘making’ involved, and this also means putting oneself on the line, taking a certain risk, and maintaining the level of risk each time by moving the operation elsewhere.
2. It is not virtual. In fact, after the print run of 1000 is sold out, it is put online for free as PDF (but its not the same – **Collapse** is established very much as a print thing. And people still hope for reprints even when the PDF is available online)

COMMERCE

In order to make the commitment, and stay faithful to the problem, to remain independent, I obviously have to find a way to make it viable – and this still a struggle!

But I have always been interested in the entrepreneurial side of this: I am fascinated by the way that virtual entities that become real, that commitment is answered, and the way that a product takes on a life of its own.

This is really a question of marketing and branding; and I am unashamedly interested in the aesthetics of **Collapse**, naturally, since I made it to please myself!

Distribution is almost entirely through our website, and a very few bookstores. The production is small-scale. And promotion has happened entirely autonomously, through blogs and other networks. So even if **Collapse** is not 'virtual', these virtual communications structures have been absolutely crucial to it, and remain so.

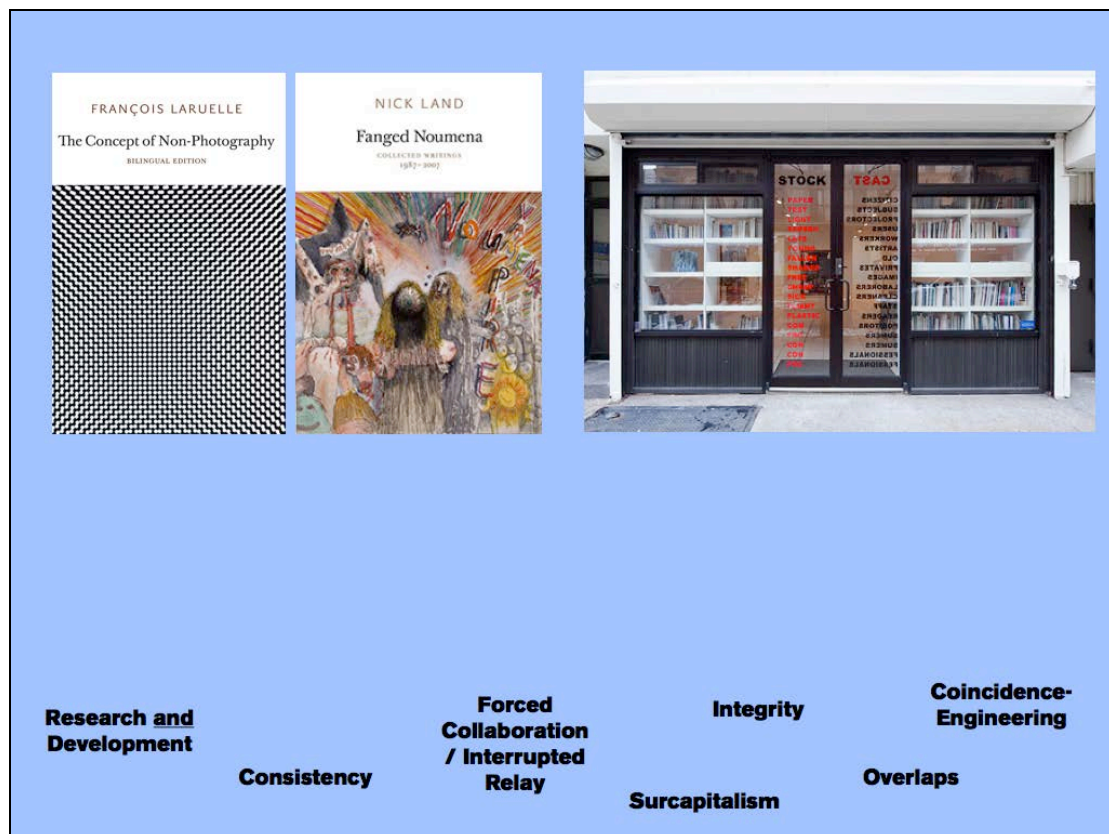
So, in the fight for survival, I see what I am doing as a kind of surcapitalism (after 'surrealism') – I am interested in employing those mechanisms of branding, marketing, exploitation of networks, not to produce a profit, but to produce a kind of joy in thinking that is commercially sustainable one way or another.



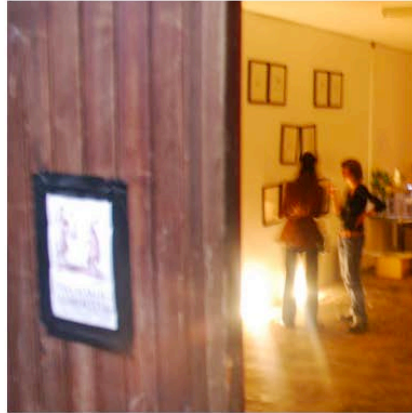
And people definitely appreciate it as an aesthetic object, the form, the fact that it is a ‘mass-produced’ thing but also each edition is numbered, it has a kind of fetish value. The design carefully thought about. I insisted that the cover is unlaminated, so that it ages, so that it becomes yours.

The success of all these aspects of the project means that, although it began by being very personal, it now has a very definite character that I feel I have to obey, so I work for it!

So you can see how, through this model of knowledge, as much as through the distributive and commercial aspects, **Collapse** acts as an agency that creates these new connections and ‘stretches’ its readers, and has produced its own audience.



One interesting way in which this has developed over recent years is not only that it has allowed Urbanomic, now, not only to be a ‘real’ publisher – we just published, together with Sequence Press in New York, which is based in Miguel Abreu’s gallery on the lower east side, our first two monographs; but also, we have moved this experiment into other spaces, with a series of events, where we invite artists who see an engagement with philosophy as important to their work.



**UF1 21 06 08
CONCEPT HORROR**

**21 03 09 URBANOMIC FALMOUTH
UFS RECORDED WHILE IT ACTUALLY HAPPENED**

Premiere of Russell Haswell's A Horde of Flies Feast on a Rotting Pheasant Carcass and Electroswat. Recordings made in the field ('near-field' & 'direct-contact' + 'artificial-worldizing'). With installation by Urbanomic. Russell Haswell is an internationally-acclaimed sound artist and recipient of a Prix Ars Electronica Award for Digital Music for his Live Salvage 1997-2000. Saturday 21 March 2009 2000-2130 hrs. Recorded While it Actually Happened, Cassette only release, ed. 200, Tochnit Aleph [Berlin] TA089 March 2009.

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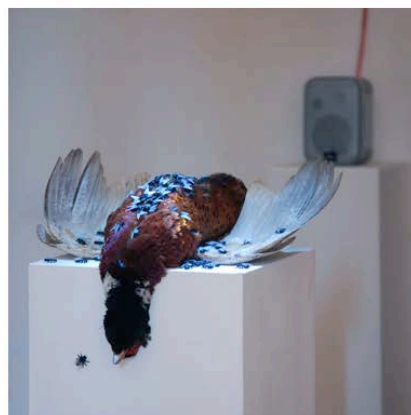


**UF5 21 03 09
RECORDED WHILE IT ACTUALLY HAPPENED**

**Premier of Russell
Haswell's A Horde of
Flies Feast on a Rotting
Pheasant Carcass and
Electrowat. Recordings
made in the field ('near-
field' & 'direct-contact' +
'artificial-worldizing'.**




**UF5 21 03 09
RECORDED WHILE IT ACTUALLY HAPPENED**



**UF5 21 03 09
RECORDED WHILE IT ACTUALLY HAPPENED**




UF5 21 03 09
RECORDED WHILE IT ACTUALLY HAPPENED


25 04 09 **URBANOMIC FALMOUTH**
UF6 **DARWIN: THE GREATEST HUMILIATION**

Freud located Darwin's theory of evolution, which 'destroyed man's supposedly privileged place in creation', within a modern history of humiliation that dealt repeated blows to the 'naive self-love of men'. What is the nature of the Darwinian humiliation, and how can the human negotiate its nihilistic consequences? Philosophers Ray Brassier and Robin Mackay speak on evolution and nihilism. Followed by audience discussion.

Ray Brassier is Associate Professor in Philosophy at the American University of Beirut. Robin Mackay is editor of the journal COLLAPSE.

Saturday 25 April 2009 1200-1600 hrs.



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UF6 25 04 09
DARWIN: THE GREATEST HUMILIATION

**Ray Brassier and
Robin Mackay speak
on evolution and
nihilism.**



**UF6 25 04 09
DARWIN: THE GREATEST HUMILIATION**



**UF6 25 04 09
DARWIN: THE GREATEST HUMILIATION**



16 05 09 **URBANOMIC FALMOUTH**
UF7 IMAGE FORCE

Amanda Beech's art works up and works out of the appeal of force, its seduction and calling up of (ir)responsibility, individual decision, challenge and transformation. Whether it is in the most gruelling of avant-garde practices or the schlockiest shoot-em-ups Hollywood churns out, or the gruesome moral provocations dispersed over the web, force rules. And it is now, as Beech constantly reminds us, an aesthetic-political category. Suhail Malik (Goldsmiths) Showing of new video work by Amanda Beech (London, currently resident artist at Spike Island) and a day event featuring discussion with the artist on her examination of the relation between image and force.

Saturday 16 May 2009 1800-2100 hrs.
Work showing 17-24 May, 1200-1800 hrs.

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UF7 16 05 09
IMAGE FORCE

**Showing of new
video work
Statecraft by
Amanda Beech
and discussion
with the artist on
her examination
of the relation
between image
and force.**



UF7 16 05 09
IMAGE FORCE



UF7 16 05 09
IMAGE FORCE



UF7 16 05 09
IMAGE FORCE



27 06 09 URBANOMIC FALMOUTH
UF8 SOUND OUT OF LINE

Live performance of a new work by sound artist Florian Hecker (Vienna), Rearranged Playlist as Auditory Stream Segregation, followed by a discussion with Hecker on his work and methods for exploring new sonic possibilities.
+ Sonic Assemblages by Dom Allen

Florian Hecker's recent work includes the critically acclaimed Sun Pandemonium (Mego 2003), Blackest Ever Black (with Russell Haswell, Warner Classics 2007), Acid in the Style of David Tudor (Mego 2009), sound design for Comme des Garçons show in Paris fashion week 2009, and live performances with Aphex Twin.

Saturday 27 June 2009 1900-late hrs.
1900 Interactive exhibition of Dom Allen assemblages
2000 Discussion with Florian Hecker
2115 Performance by Florian Hecker
2200 Urbanomic DJs

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UF8 27 06 09
SOUND OUT OF LINE

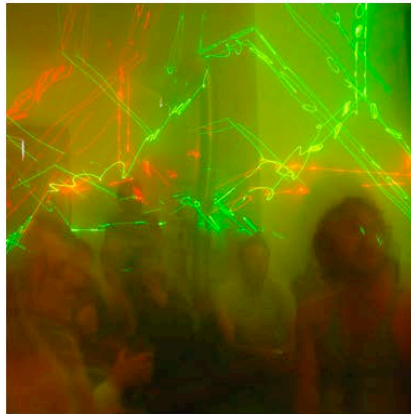
**Live performance of
a new work by
Florian Hecker,
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UF8 27 06 09
SOUND OUT OF LINE




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UF8 27 06 09
SOUND OUT OF LINE



UF8 27 06 09
SOUND OUT OF LINE

 **06.02.10 URBANOMIC FALMOUTH**
UF09 GEO/PHILOSOPHY


Launch of Collapse Volume VI: Geo/Philosophy

Showing of Renée Green's film *Endless Dreams and Waters Between*
+ work by **FIELD CLUB** and Angela Detanico & Rafael Lain

As far as we know, philosophical thought, indeed thinking as such, occurs only on one planet. *Collapse VI: Geo/philosophy* brings together philosophers, theorists, eco-critics, leading scientific experts in climate change, and artists whose work interrogates the link between philosophy, geography, ecology and cartography, in order to create a portrait of the present state of 'planetary thought'.

Saturday 06 February from 2000 hrs

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UF9 06 02 10
GEO/PHILOSOPHY

Launch of Collapse VI: Geo/Philosophy. Showing Renée Green's film Endless Dreams and Water Between, and work by Charles Avery, FIELDCLUB, Detanico and Lain and Gilles Grelet



**UF9 06 02 10
GEO/PHILOSOPHY**



**UF9 06 02 10
GEO/PHILOSOPHY**



13.03.10 - 21.03.10 **URBANOMIC FALMOUTH**
UF10 SECRETS OF CREATION

How can artists and artworks stage a 'dramatisation' of abstract concepts that allows them to be grasped by non-experts?

In a unique project crossing the borders of art, science and philosophy, artist **CONRAD SHAWCROSS**, whose work presents interrogations of scientific and philosophical concepts, and mathematician **DR MATTHEW WATKINS**, curator of the Number Theory and Physics Archive, Honorary Research Fellow in Mathematics at Exeter University, and author of *Secrets of Creation*, will spend a week-long collaborative residency focusing on the above question. A public exhibition displaying the results of the residency will follow, opening with a public symposium at which they will discuss the project and its outcomes.

Symposium: Saturday 13 March 1800-2100 hrs

Exhibition: Open daily 15-21 March 1000-1700 hrs

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UF10 13-21 03 10 **SECRETS OF CREATION**



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UF10 SECRETS OF CREATION

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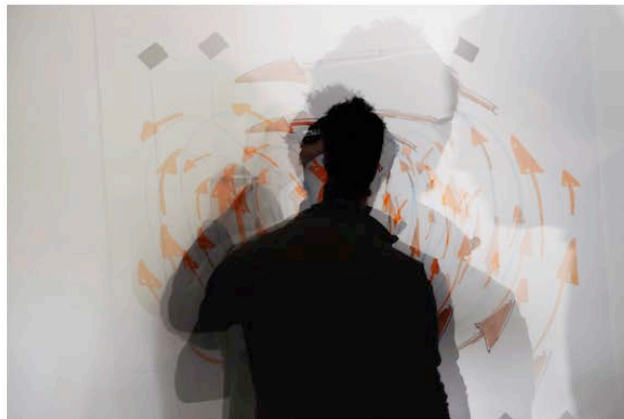


UF10 13-21 03 10 **SECRETS OF CREATION**

During a week-long residency, artist Conrad Shawcross and mathematician Dr Matthew Watkins explore how artists 'dramatise' scientific concepts



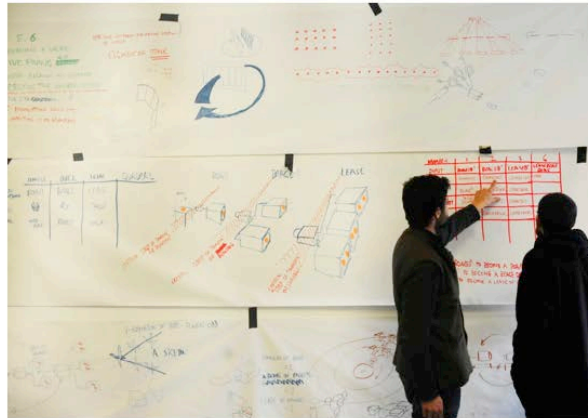
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SECRETS OF CREATION**



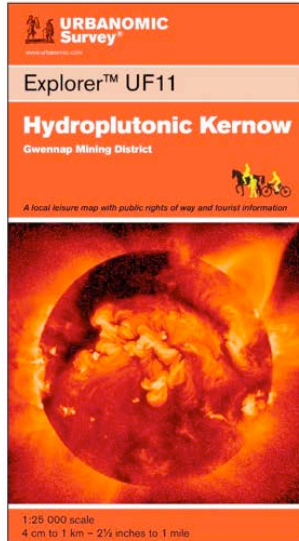
**UF10 13-21 03 10
SECRETS OF CREATION**



UF10 13-21 03 10
SECRETS OF CREATION



UF10 13-21 03 10
SECRETS OF CREATION



UF11 21 05 10
HYDROPLUTONIC KERNOW

**Urbanomic conduct a
'field trip' for The
Falmouth Convention,
revealing the unique
configuration of
cosmic and terrestrial
forces known as
Kernovian Syndrome**



UF11 21 05 10
HYDROPLUTONIC KERNOW



UF11 21 05 10
HYDROPLUTONIC KERNOW



UF11 21 05 10
HYDROPLUTONIC KERNOW



UF11 21 05 10
HYDROPLUTONIC KERNOW



UF11 21 05 10
HYDROPLUTONIC KERNOW

Urbanomic present an evening event at Tate Britain with contemporary sound, video and sculptural work, and other interventions exploring the emerging philosophical paradigm of Speculative Realism and its impact on contemporary art practice.



**UF12
THE REAL THING**



**UF12 03 09 10
THE REAL THING**



UF12 03 09 10
THE REAL THING



UF12 03 09 10
THE REAL THING

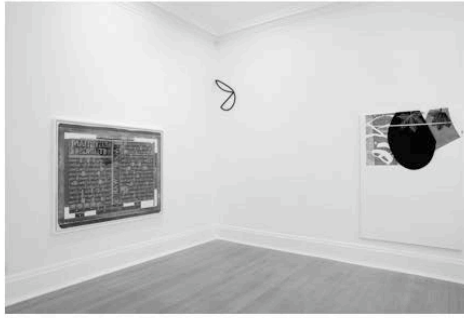


UF12 03 09 10
THE REAL THING

THE MEDIUM
OF CONTINGENCY



UF14 19 01 11
THE MEDIUM OF CONTINGENCY



UF14 19 01 11
THE MEDIUM OF CONTINGENCY



UF14 19 01 11
THE MEDIUM OF CONTINGENCY




Lastly, Urbanomic have been involved in a collaborative commission with Florian Hecker, which was first presented at the 'Real Thing' event at Tate Britain. I'd like to recount the history of this collaboration because I think it's a superb example of how the model that I have describes serves to activate new connections.

Florian, an electronic composer, had contacted me after having read the interview with Roberto Trotta: he said, I was so excited by this that I made a piece called 'Dark Energy'. This piece eventually was shown at Sadie Coles Gallery in London

Then I worked with Florian, and Russell Haswell, on a piece for **Collapse 3** about their work with Xenakis's UPIC system

And so recently, Florian became interested in Quentin Meillassoux's philosophical work, and Urbanomic commissioned him, with funding from the Elephant Trust, to make a piece based on Quentin's concept of 'hyperchaos', which was first performed at the Tate event, and the CD has just come out, on the Editions Mego label, with a booklet included which I edited and contributed to. So this story is a real case of production happening, across many different fields, enabled by the network of contributors of Collapse.


Research and Development

Consistency

Forced Collaboration / Interrupted Relay

Integrity

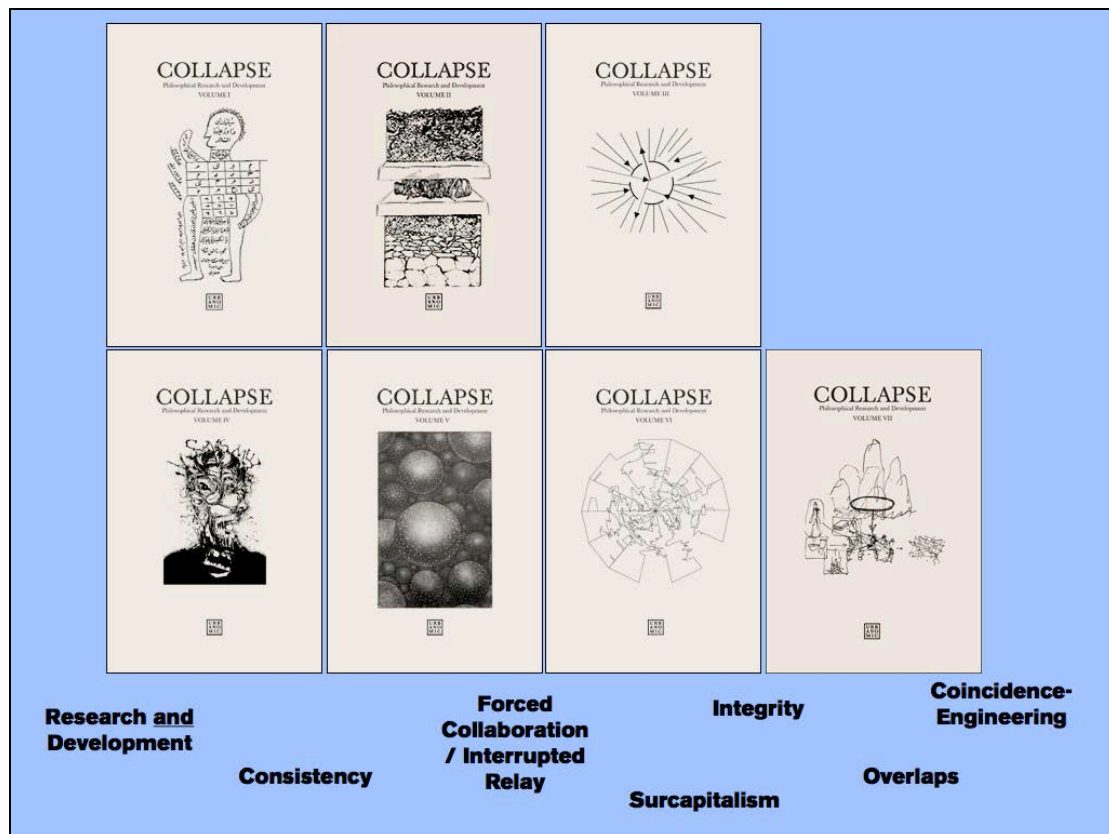
Surcapitalism

Coincidence-Engineering

Overlaps

And, featured in **Collapse VII**, John Gerrard is another artist we have been involved with, we showed his work at the Tate event, and he introduced me to this very interesting collective, AO&, from Vienna, who include a very special form of cookery as part of their practice. They are included, along with John's work, in **Collapse VII**, and we are launching this volume as a part of their june-july residency, with Outset, in London. This is just another example of how these spontaneous connections happen ...

I should add that I hope for all the documentation and transcripts from these events will now be folded back into the a future volume of Collapse, so we could say that it has started to produce its own content through these events.



Finally I have to say that, I began by talking about it as a fanzine – and it is still for the most part a one-man-show and a struggle! There is no funding available, and I still do almost everything myself... I learnt everything – design, typography, distribution, and so on – as I went along. **Collapse** is a success to the extent that its sales now cover the cost of the next printing; but as for the work that goes into it, it remains a 'labour of love'.

But I'm sure some others are in the same position; and I don't want to end on a negative note. What I would like to emphasize is that **Collapse** is an interesting case of how to bring together the qualities of print media; the technologies that now make it possible for one person to create a very individual, low-budget but (I hope) high-quality production; and the communications that allow the building of new networks of enthusiastic and committed producers, worldwide, as well as the building of a new international audience (We even find facebook, twitter, etc... are really useful in this respect). Through an experimental usage of all of these different aspects of 21st century publishing, it is possible to start from nothing and create a publication that has a real presence and influence, actually creating new connections for people working in different fields, and therefore making new events and works possible. Lastly, someone once asked me about **Collapse**, rather dismissively, so do you just publish work by your friends? And I realized that in fact it's the opposite: some of my most valued

friends now are people who I have connected with through the enthusiasm and commitment I have put into **Collapse**, and which they share.